United Nations A/71/PV.11

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-first session

11th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 21 September 2016, 9.15 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Address by Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Niinistö: I wish to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. You can count on Finland's full support in your important responsibilities.

This will be the last General Assembly for the current Secretary-General in that capacity. I thank him for his untiring efforts to advance the common good of humankind. During his time in office, he has been instrumental in setting an ambitious agenda for sustainable development and for tackling climate change. Those achievements will make a difference for generations to come. We had the pleasure of hosting the Secretary-General last December, when Finland marked its sixtieth anniversary as a Member of the United Nations. It was an opportunity to remind ourselves of what the United Nations stands for. The United Nations is the embodiment and arbiter of the rules-based international system of sovereign States. It is the only truly global body that we have, but we must work together to ensure that it functions better in fulfilling its many tasks.

Unfortunately, the world continues to confront challenges to international peace and security all over. Narrow-minded nationalism, racism and violent extremism are on the rise. We must battle those destructive ideologies. The recent nuclear test by North Korea is a cause for grave concern. The conflict in Ukraine still awaits its resolution. All illegal actions, including the annexation of Crimea by Russia, are to be condemned. The complex and horrendous conflicts in and around Syria and Iraq continue to affect not only the Middle East but, indirectly, also Europe, including my own country, Finland.

Such conflicts have already killed and maimed hundreds of thousands and displaced many more. They have given rise to unprecedented flows of asylum-seekers towards and into Europe. European societies are compassionate, but today they are under stress. Their capacity to provide for asylum-seekers and to integrate them at home, or to provide humanitarian assistance abroad, has limits.

During the week of the United Nations high-level meeting, we discussed refugees and migration, and for good reason. We have to work together to find sustainable solutions at the global and regional levels to better control borders, while safeguarding the rights of those seeking international protection on the basis of a well-founded fear of persecution. That requires

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vision, courage and leadership. The alternative is stark: borders will become walls closed even to those entitled to refugee status.

The problem is severe. Every day tens of thousands of people are displaced as a result of conflict, persecution or natural disasters, while others are on the move seeking a better life. There is an increasing need for humanitarian assistance. The European Union and my country, as a member, will continue to shoulder their share of responsibility in efforts to deal with the crisis, but it will never be enough. Humanitarian action will never compensate for the inability to address the root causes of forced migration.

It is important to take a longer-term perspective. The conflicts that we are now facing require urgent humanitarian action, and yet the underlying causes are long term. Economic, social and political progress is, therefore, imperative. The international community can and must assist. The United Nations, for its part, can help to defuse latent conflicts through conflict prevention, mediation and, if necessary, preventive peace operations. However, the ultimate responsibility for redesigning societies lies with the peoples concerned and their Governments. Local ownership is the solution. For a number of years Finland and Turkey have led efforts to strengthen United Nations-based mediation. There is a need to foster closer cooperation between different actors, such as traditional and religious leaders, and to draw more participation from civil society. We are pleased that progress is being made, as evidenced by the adoption of the latest General Assembly resolution on mediation (resolution 70/304) just two weeks ago.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of Finland's participation in United Nations peacekeeping. Since 1956, some 50,000 Finnish men and women have served in United Nations operations around the world. Finnish citizens continue to serve in the Middle East and elsewhere, and some of them have made the ultimate sacrifice. We honour the work of those men and women.

Finland is committed to ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening the various aspects of peace operations. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to bring United Nations peacekeeping into the twenty-first century. The Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping hosted by President Obama of the United States last year was a significant step in the right direction and needs to be continued.

The problem of the illicit flow of conventional weapons persists, but finally progress has been made — the Arms Trade Treaty has entered into force. However, two tasks remain — the Treaty needs to be adopted by all and implemented effectively. It has not been ratified by many of the Member States whose contributions are needed, and so I urge Members to join without delay.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a year ago was a milestone, as was the conclusion of the Paris Agreement to combat climate change. The true test, however, will be the implementation of those instruments, which, in Finland, is being carried out in an inclusive way. We are focusing on establishing partnerships among the Government, the private sector, universities and civil society. All Finnish citizens are encouraged to get involved. I have personally committed to reducing my carbon footprint by half over a decade by signing up with the Global Citizens Climate Pledge initiative. The initiative was made global a couple of weeks ago in an event hosted by the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A similar mechanism exists for inclusive participation in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Gender equality and the political, economic and social empowerment of girls and women are key drivers for sustainable development and for combating climate change. In my own country, gender equality has been vital in our rise from poverty to prosperity. I welcome all efforts that raise the issue, such as the HeForShe movement initiated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. I am personally involved in that important work. However, the United Nations and its Member States still have a long way to go to meet their target of gender equality.

The next Secretary-General will be subject to almost colossal expectations. Finland welcomes a selection process that is more transparent and more inclusive. We also welcome the fact that there are so many female candidates interested in the position.

We too have a message for the incoming United Nations leader. We would like to see the new Secretary-General work closely together with, and, if necessary, sometimes even one step ahead of, the Security Council in fulfilling the mandate of the Charter of the United Nations. Another challenge is to improve the United Nation's functions as an organization. The

next Secretary-General can do that by ensuring that the various United Nation activities complement each other, so that the United Nations truly delivers as one.

Let me finish by assuring the Assembly of Finland's full support for the incoming Secretary-General — whoever she or he may be.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Let me begin my congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I also extend our deep appreciation to your immediate predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his able stewardship of the seventieth session of the Assembly.

We all vividly recall the momentous occasion in September last year when we adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This session of the General Assembly provides us with a unique opportunity to review the measures we have taken so far, at both the international and national levels, in line with our commitments to global socioeconomic transformation. We hope that this time around this Agenda will meet a better fate.

We are encouraged that since September last year, foundational steps have been and are being taken at various levels to implement the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, we note the convening of the Global Infrastructure Forum in April 2016, the convening of the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals in June, and the launch of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism together with the activation of its online platform. We also note the follow-up meetings pertaining to the development of concrete actions for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. These activities at the global level have been equally matched at the national level, with virtually all Member States reporting making preparations for the implementation of this universal Agenda.

For our part, I am happy to report that we have established national and multi-stakeholder and multisectoral structures to assimilate and implement the 2030 Agenda. We have done that in a coordinated and integrated manner, with our national development programme, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation. Our task of assimilating the 2030 Agenda has been made relatively less challenging, in that the vision and aspirations of our national economic blueprint and the global agenda are basically the same. Our biggest impediment to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda is the burden of punitive and heinous sanctions imposed against us by some hegemonic and neo-imperialist Powers among us here.

My country, Zimbabwe, is the innocent victim of the spiteful sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western Powers. These countries have maintained the sanctions on us for some 16 years now. As a country, we are being collectively punished for exercising the one primordial principle enshrined in the United Nations Charter, that of sovereign independence. We are being punished for doing what all other nations have done and still do, namely, possess and own their natural resources and attend to the basic interests of their people. Those who have imposed these sanctions would rather have us pander to their interests at the expense of the basic needs of the majority of our people. As long as these economic and financial sanctions remain in place, Zimbabwe's capacity to fully and effectively implement the 2030 Agenda will be deeply curtailed. I repeat my call on the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States and their allies to lift the illegal and unjustified sanctions against my country and its people. Let us all be bound by our commitments to the 2030 Agenda, in which we agreed to eschew sanctions in favour of dialogue.

The General Assembly will elect the next Secretary-General of our Organization at the current session. We

have witnessed commendable efforts aimed at making the selection process of the next Secretary-General inclusive and transparent. The greater involvement of the General Assembly and therefore of the majority of our membership does not, however, mask the opaqueness of the process at the Security Council level. We expect the current experience to lead to a more inclusive and transparent process in the future.

For over 20 years, many of us have come to this rostrum, demanding and pleading for the reform of the Security Council. We are no closer to achieving that goal today than we were 20 years ago. This is so, in spite of the universal acknowledgement of the injustice, unfairness and inappropriateness of the current composition of the Council. We now have an opportunity in the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations to redress this unjust and unjustifiable situation in the interest of a strong and more united Organization capable of delivering on its mandate.

Our common commitment to leaving no one behind demands that we address the plight of people still living under colonialism and occupation. The people of Palestine have lived under occupation and persecution for over 49 years. It is high time that the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, fulfilled its Charter duties and obligations by implementing its resolutions, which include General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The two-State solution, based on the pre-June 1967 borders, should now be pursued within those parameters and timelines. This is the only way to achieve durable peace in the Middle East.

On our own continent, the United Nations is duty-bound by Charter principle to redouble its efforts to ensure the full realization of the right of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full realization of the right of the peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation. We urge the holding of the independence referendum for the Sahrawi people without much further delay.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the tremendous work he has done during his tenure. We have appreciated his presence at African Union summits and his visits to Africa as a clear testimony to his commitment to and partnership with Africa in advancing the cause of freedom, development and peace — and the security of our continent. We particularly applaud the Secretary-General's leadership in mobilizing the entire United Nations system and indeed the international community to partner with Africa in stopping and rolling back the Ebola epidemic, which claimed thousands of lives and undermined Africa's socioeconomic development. He has indeed been an indefatigable advocate for self-determination and a persistent champion of inclusive development, peace and coalition-building for dealing with humanitarian and other crises. We wish him well in all his future endeavours, and I am sure that many of us will miss him, especially we of Africa.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Bachelet Jeria (*spoke in Spanish*): We are living in times that show us the necessity of shifting our perspective with regard to addressing development. Our world is in the midst of a crisis that extends back years, and which, far from being resolved, has only worsened, generating criticism of political institutions that do not seem capable of representing their citizens. At the same time, economic growth has given way to a global slowdown and has not been able to provide the world's population with the well-being that it seeks.

It would appear that the far-reaching dynamics that caused the crisis some years ago were not superseded but merely superficially retouched. But citizens today are more aware and empowered. Thanks to new technology, they have new means of expression. They

are showing us that in their daily lives, at their places of work, at their children's schools, in the health of their families, in the security of their cities, in the pensions of their mothers and fathers and in the relations between men and women, the negative effects of inequitable development are still being felt. This is the main basis for the citizen discontent that we have seen in various parts of the world.

At the same time, we are facing an unprecedented environmental crisis that threatens life on earth, has medical, clinical, economic, climatic and environmental impacts and mostly affects the most vulnerable. These are combined with violence and armed conflict in many parts of the world, which increase precariousness and exponentially expand forced displacement and major migratory movements.

Citizen discontent is the expression of disillusionment about the promised development that they desire and for which they have fought valiantly but which is still beyond their reach. We are witnessing a growing schism between the representatives and the represented. There is a lack of trust in national Governments as well as in multilateral forums. They appear not to be tackling the priorities of the common citizen in a timely manner or with the required depth. Now is not the time for taking the easy but ultimately destructive route of populism. Now is the time for action inspired by an ethically motivated and civically oriented pragmatism.

The Sustainable Development Goals that we are committed to achieving by 2030 demonstrate that the international community knows that it must embark on far-reaching changes and implement them with concrete measures. Now we must summon up the political will in multilateral forums and in each of our countries. There is inertia to be overcome and there are interests to be dealt with. The political and development crisis that we are facing has global dynamics. Nobody, no nation or social group can do it alone. We need to engage in multilateral dialogues at the regional and global levels, assuming realistic but demanding commitments. I insist that we must act now. At home, the citizens are waiting for us, asking us to transmit their demands and return with decisions and determination. I hope that we can do that.

Chile is a mid-sized country that is not yet fully developed. However, its rapid modernization in recent decades has placed us squarely at the frontier of the challenges of modernity, with the tensions inherent in democracy and economic growth. I am speaking at this rostrum today having had this experience. I am also speaking from experience of having embarked on the changes requested by the citizens of my homeland. I know how difficult it is to make changes, but I also know the hope of seeing a new horizon gradually emerge. This is the course on which we have embarked as a nation, but also as a part of the international community.

At the regional and international levels, our country has advocated convergence in diversity in Latin America, seeking a common agenda that, despite our differences, gives us strength as a bloc and as a region. And we have made progress. We are working on integration with Mexico, Colombia and Peru in the Pacific Alliance, which already has 49 observer States and which is growing stronger decisively and pragmatically. Today, two integration mechanisms — the Pacific Alliance and the Southern Common Market — are aiming to promote a better Latin America, strengthening cooperation and making clear that national development and international relations cannot be seen as separate subjects.

In Latin America there are significant differences, but we are working together in spite of them to meet the new challenges. We are doing that within the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, where 33 member States are seeking to confront the new political, social and economic environment. In addition, within the Union of South American Nations, South American countries consult each other to address common political problems.

Our nation's principles are immutable and include a call to peace, democracy and respect for human rights, respect for international law and the treaties, sovereignty and the obligation to cooperate. The promotion and protection of democracy and human rights at the international level are not contrary to the principle of non-intervention. In fact, today that is a global achievement.

I believe that Colombia has given us one of the greatest pieces of news this year. At the regional and international levels, there is hope for peace. Next Monday, the agreement to end the hostilities of a civil war that has been raging for more than 50 years will be signed. Chile, a country that also had a difficult transition to democracy, would like to continue supporting its Latin American brother in handling its

post-conflict situation, including with military and police observers in the United Nations political mission, working with it in solidarity as we have done in other brother countries such as Haiti.

We have committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, we signed the Paris Agreement — the most ambitious and robust agreement in the history of multilateral negotiations on climate change. Together with Monaco and France, we proposed the Because the Ocean Declaration to stress the need to pay special attention to the way in which environmental degradation affects ocean waters. It has been signed by more than 30 countries.

Protecting the oceans is vital for our common future, and today they are under threat. Chile has therefore decided to take action by creating the Nazca-Desventuradas Marine Park, which is the largest of its kind in Latin America. We are also engaged in a South-South cooperation project to assist Caribbean countries in combating marine pollution.

Outside of this building and in the most diverse corners of the world, people, their leaders, civil society and the media are expecting the States Members of this Organization to provide cooperative, creative and tangible responses to the problems of the twenty-first century. That is why I raise my voice again in favour of Security Council reform to reflect today's new realities. I raise my voice in favour of an effective management of the United Nations and greater openness in its procedures, including the election of its new Secretary-General. I ask him or her to be committed to the principles that serve the people who founded the Organization. We know that successfully meeting challenges requires joint, consensual efforts. We need more multilateralism, cooperation and dialogue. This is an irreplaceable forum for debate and adoption of agreements. It is a platform for coordinated action.

Ms. Kasese-Bota (Zambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Chile is a country open to the world, which promotes clear-cut rules and political and economic agreements in order to move forward. The United Nations must play its role as a place of consensus in opposition to inequality and the discrimination against religious, ethnic and gender minorities, a place to which the most vulnerable may turn. Let us make the United Nations the Organization that our peoples need and call for.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Geingob: Let me congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. He hails from a country that is held in high esteem and greatly respected by the Namibian people. Namibia is a child of international solidarity and was midwifed by the United Nations. Fiji was one of the countries that contributed peacekeepers to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia. Given his background, we are confident that this session will be a complete success.

The President rightly emphasized in his acceptance speech (see A/70/PV.103) that the main purpose of the seventy-first session would be to achieve momentum on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such momentum is evidenced by the choice of theme of the session, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world". Namibia joins the President in reiterating the fact that the implementation of this Agenda is imperative if we are to safeguard a secure world for future generations.

As the Secretary-General has said in his report on the work of the United Nations (A/71/1), the people of the world have implored the United Nations to do more now — in more spheres of activity, in more locations, in more challenging circumstances — than at any other point in the history of the Organization. The Secretary-General's commitment to the Organization and

concern about the present issues affecting the world have impressed me. He indicated that he has fought to leave the Organization better prepared for the immense challenges ahead and capable of serving its entire membership and "we the peoples" in every corner of the world. He has raised the bar, and, indeed, the onus is now on us to carry the mantle of humanitarian excellence to even greater heights.

In September last year, we committed ourselves to a new Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are all in agreement that the effective implementation of that Agenda will require coherence and complementarity among global, continental, regional, national and local efforts, as stated in the Secretary-General's report. We are confident that we will join the global drive to ensure a life of dignity for all. We will spare no effort in working to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.

Namibia agrees with the notion that the Agenda, successor to the Millennium Development Goals, will need to fully integrate economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship. In terms of economic growth, we need to talk about inclusive growth that will translate into the creation of decent jobs opportunities for our citizens. In other words, we must do more to move away from the current jobless growth model that prevails in many of our member countries. We should therefore aim to grow our economy in a sustainable and inclusive manner in order to ensure that we effectively tackle the scourge of poverty.

As a consequence of the slowdown in the global economic cycle and a drop in commodity prices, the Namibian economy is experiencing a downturn this year, following robust growth averaging more than 5 per cent during the previous five years. We are mindful that, in order to make a meaningful dent in poverty, we need to grow at a higher level. We remain optimistic about the long-term outlook for Namibia, as key economic fundamentals, including fiscal and external current account sustainability, remain intact. A testament to this is the fact that the Fitch Ratings agency recently affirmed Namibia's international default rate at BBB-, with bond issuance in the South African and Namibian markets at AA+, although the longer-term outlook was revised from stable to negative.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia remains committed to managing the economy in a prudent and responsible manner and has already instituted expenditure, revenue and structural reform measures to address concerns raised by rating agencies about the long-term outlook of our country We would like to assure all our partners that there is no risk of Namibia not honouring its debt obligations in the near and medium terms. In fact, we remain bullish about the country's economic outlook. Moreover, we remain committed to creating conditions in Namibia that will enable the full participation of the private sector in the economy. The Government alone cannot shoulder the burden of extending development to all. The private sector has a crucial role to play in stimulating economic growth and job creation in our country.

Regarding social justice, we are all concerned by the fact that we are witnessing the highest levels of forced displacement of people since the founding of this Organization. The current refugee crisis needs our immediate attention and our collective action. As the Secretary-General says in his report (A/71/1), global solidarity is needed for us to effectively respond to the needs of our fellow human beings. We need to determine the basic factors that cause people to flee in such large numbers so that we can tackle the root causes, rather than the symptoms, of this evil. Our belief is that no one must feel left out, for we are aware that inclusivity spells peace, while exclusivity spells war.

Earlier this morning we attended the high-level event on the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Namibia welcomes this development, and we are happy to announce that we have ratified the Agreement, which represents a milestone in our endeavours to fight the devastating effects of climate change. Climate change is a global problem and requires a global response from all of us, in both developed and developing countries. In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Declaration on disaster risk reduction remain the central multilateral frameworks for cooperative action for addressing climate-change-induced disaster risks, such as drought.

Namibia is one of the driest countries in the world. Consequently, we have undertaken ambitious domestic action on climate change, including mitigation and adaptation, to surmount the losses and damages arising from climate-change-induced natural disasters. At the same time, we are developing renewable energy resources, such as solar, wind and hydroelectricity power. In tackling this crisis, the principle of common yet differentiated responsibility must be upheld.

Furthermore, the activation of the Green Climate Fund is a welcome and timely development. This accords us an opportunity to decentralize the operations of the Fund. In this context, I wish to announce Namibia's offer to host the African regional hub of the Green Climate Fund at the appropriate time. As members may recall, Namibia came in second to South Korea in the bid to host the world headquarters of the Green Climate Fund. As a consolation prize, we would therefore be honoured to host the African regional hub of the Green Climate Fund. Namibia counts on the support of Member States.

Namibia believes that the United Nations remains the centre for the consolidation of international rule of law. Therefore, the United Nations system should serve as a banner of transparency and accountability. For Governments and organizations such as the United Nations to regain the trust of people who have lost trust in global leadership over the years, inclusivity and transparency must be placed at the forefront of governance; for transparency plus accountability equals trust.

Reforming the Security Council is therefore paramount. The reform of the Security Council cannot be reduced to the aspirations of a few countries. The Security Council is too important an organ to be left to the interests of a few. Hence we reiterate our call for the comprehensive reform of the Security Council, thereby making it more democratic and transparent so as to better serve humanity. Namibia remains fully committed to the Common African Position on the proposed reform of the United Nations. We are of the opinion that the Security Council should reflect the broad membership of our Organization. Fairness and justice warrant that Africa be part of the equation.

As a nation that emerged from a long, bitter and bloody struggle for independence and has since enjoyed 26 years of freedom, Namibia sympathizes with those who are not yet independent and who are denied their basic human rights. Accordingly, Namibia calls for the full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine. The international community must fulfil its obligations and assist the people of Palestine in realizing their basic right to independence and self-determination. Their freedom and independence cannot be denied forever — it can only be delayed. Let history be our best teacher.

Namibia recognizes and acknowledges the role played by the Kingdom of Morocco in helping us attain our independence. I can proudly say that the people of Morocco are our brothers and sisters, which was affirmed during my two-day visit to that country. We are a nation that believes in being an enemy to none and a friend to all, and we also believe in a world where no one should feel left out. Unfortunately, our brothers and sisters in Western Sahara do feel left out.

We therefore hope that the people of Western Sahara will soon enjoy the freedom that the Kingdom of Morocco helped Namibia to attain. It is in this regard that we call for the full implementation of resolutions calling for a referendum in occupied Western Sahara, so that the people there can freely express themselves as to whether they opt for independence or unification with Morocco and so that the disagreement between brothers and sisters can come to an amicable end.

Namibia remains confident that despite the fact that humankind faces some of the most unprecedented challenges in its history, under the United Nations we can live up to the promise of ensuring a life of dignity for all. Let us not lose heart, for Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said: "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." Let us therefore realize that our differences should not draw us further from one another, but, rather, nearer to each other. Let us celebrate unity in diversity.

Together as people who realize that we belong to each other, we can bring about change in this world through this indispensable institution — the United Nations. It is time to usher in a new era of humanity, characterized by peace, unity and dignity for all the world's citizens.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement just made.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of

the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Li Keqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I believe that under his presidency, this session will make good progress on its agenda. I also wish to express appreciation for the effective work of Mr. Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I also would like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has with modesty and a drive for harmony and inclusiveness worked diligently and in a down-to-earth manner over the past decade and whose work has contributed significantly to world peace, sustainable development and the advancement and protection of human rights around the world.

In 2015, the United Nations held a summit to consider the post-2015 development agenda and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has opened the way for a new vision for global development. At the summit, China's President Xi Jinping delivered a speech (see A/70/PV.7) entitled, "Towards win-win partnerships for sustainable development", in which he expounded on China's principles and positions. The year 2016 is the first year for the implementation of that Agenda.

The general debate at the seventy-first session focuses on "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", a theme that could not be more relevant. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I would like to state today that China has taken action to advance the Sustainable Development Agenda, and it has been one of the first States to submit its national plan on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the United Nations.

Sustainable development concerns development first and foremost, and development underpins every human achievement. Without development, nothing is sustainable. The lack of development is often at the root of many of the world's problems — poverty, the refugee crisis, war, conflicts or terrorism. All of these could be attributed to insufficient development, and none of them can be satisfactorily resolved without development. Only development can guarantee people's fundamental rights and interests. Only development can root out the causes for global challenges. Only development can promote human civilization and progress.

Of course, development must be sustainable in all its dimensions, otherwise it will stall. Growth will stall and be held back. Development cannot be sustainable if it is unbalanced and unequal and widens the gap between the North and the South, and between the rich and the poor. Development cannot be sustainable if it is expensive, if it is driven by high consumption with high pollution and high carbon emissions, or if it depletes resources and strains the environment. Development cannot be sustainable if economic growth and social progress are not well coordinated. Only when we have a profound understanding of the implications of sustainability, make progress in poverty reduction at all levels, engage in North-South and South-South cooperation on climate change and many other fronts, and promote equal sharing and green development can we ensure that development will hold its ground and be sustainable.

Sustainable development must be inclusive and interconnected. Currently, the sustainable development endeavour is faced with great challenges. Regional conflicts and hotspots are without end. Traditional and non-traditional security threats intertwine, and the environment for sustainable development gives no reason for optimism. World economic recovery remains lukewarm, and globalization faces strong headwinds. The momentum for sustainable development is weak. There are frequent outbreaks of major infectious diseases and the eruption of natural disasters. Other issues to be faced are energy and resource security, food security and financial security. As those elements become intertwined, sustainable development necessarily faces an uphill battle. Such difficult moments call for greater confidence.

Humankind has the wisdom and the ability to find a way out. For that to happen, there must be cooperation and a spirit of working together to overcome difficulties. It is time that the international community assumes a new perspective, sees itself as a community with a shared future and interconnected interests and makes concerted efforts to tackle global challenges.

For sustainable development to evolve, we must keep both short-term and long-term interests in mind while making concrete efforts to tackle challenges, actively transform and change our world, and achieve our new vision. We are ready to and must uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Without peace and stability, there will be no

sustainable development; even the benefits already attained risk being lost.

The hard-won peace that has prevailed over the past 70 or more years testifies to the effectiveness of the international order and the norms of international relations based on the United Nations Charter. These norms and this order must be resolutely upheld because they serve the common interests of the people of all countries and provide the most essential guarantee for achieving sustainable development.

All countries need to observe the purposes and principles of the Charter, support the leading role of the United Nations and the Security Council in global affairs, and support the reform and improvement of global governance mechanisms to reflect the changes in the international, political and economic landscape. A new concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security should be nurtured. A global partnership that features dialogue instead of confrontation, and partnership instead of alliance, should be established.

We must pursue political solutions to hotspot issues. Political solutions are the fundamental way out. History has repeatedly shown that to repress violence with force can only lead to more hatred and warfare from which no winner will emerge. Parties involved in conflicts must renounce a zero-sum mentality, settle disputes through dialogue, address differences through consultation and seek reconciliation with tolerance. The mediation efforts of the international community must be fair and impartial; they should facilitate the settlement of issues, not invite new problems.

On Syria, we must remain committed to a political solution. The international community should encourage all relevant parties in Syria to end the fighting at an early date and reach a comprehensive political solution.

On the Korean nuclear issue, we should remain committed to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, uphold peace and stability on the peninsula and seek consultation and dialogue-based solutions so as to maintain the international nuclear-non-proliferation regime.

Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind and must be combatted resolutely. At the same time, double standards should not be applied, nor should terrorism be linked with certain countries, races or religions.

We must work together for the safe, steady recovery of the world economy, which cannot afford to maintain the long-term sluggishness we see now. Otherwise, sustainable development will be a fountain without a source. The current world economy is faced with both insufficient aggregate demand and prominent structural conflicts. We need to employ various kinds of effective policy instruments in a holistic manner, combine demand management with supply-side reform, and balance short-term policies with long-term ones.

\We call on all countries to make concerted efforts to drive the global economy along a road of strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. Given their significant influence, major economies need to act responsibly in policymaking, particularly when coordinating macroeconomic policies. While focusing on their own growth, they also need to strive to reduce negative spillover and refrain from adding to the weakness of the global economic recovery.

Economic globalization, represented by liberalization in and facilitation of trade and investment, has been a significant driving force behind rapid global growth in past decades, but it is no panacea to the ills of the world. Frankly, globalization has to some degree taken its toll on industries and communities in certain countries. Active measures need to be taken to address the problem, but it is always important to keep in mind the bigger picture, instead of focusing only on narrower interests.

Globalization is consistent with the long-term and fundamental interests of all countries. Countries need to firmly oppose protectionism in all its forms, resolutely uphold the free-trade regime represented by the World Trade Organization and promote sustained and sound economic growth for all countries through win-win and all-win cooperation. We must redouble efforts to address global challenges facing humankind. Greater attention and more support need to be given to Africa and the least developed countries to help them speed up industrialization, ensure food security and eliminate poverty and hunger so that more people can lead a life of decency and dignity.

More needs to be done to create an international environment that helps reduce inequality and imbalance in global development. International institutions should spend their new resources on helping developing countries on a priority basis. Developed countries should make good on their official development

assistance commitments, while developing countries need to pursue self-development and find paths suited to their national conditions.

As we speak, the world is facing the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. It is imperative to ensure refugee access to basic living conditions in order to stave off humanitarian crises. It is of fundamental importance to root out the causes of war and renew development so that countries of origin of refugees can embark on a path of enduring peace, development and prosperity.

Countries need to stay committed to the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity and respective capabilities. They also need to jointly tackle climate change and work for the Paris Agreement to be universally accepted and take effect at an early date. Developed countries need to play a leading role, deliver on their emissions-reduction pledges and help developing countries improve their capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Since China adopted its reform and opening-up policy, the Chinese economy has maintained rapid growth, becoming the world's second-largest economy in 2010. In 2014, China's gross domestic product reached $10 trillion. In recent years, despite a greater basis of measurement for development, overall global complexity and long-accumulated underlying domestic issues, China has relied on reform and innovation to maintain a medium-high growth rate and accelerated economic transformation and upgrading.

In the first half of this year, the growth rate was 6.7 per cent, which was among the fastest in the major economies. On an adjusted annual basis, over 13 million new urban jobs will have been added. In other words, in the first eight months of this year, 9.5 million new urban jobs were created. Every percentage point of growth now equals several percentage points of growth in previous years, and the yearly economic increment is tantamount to the economic aggregate of a middle-income country. China's effective management of its own affairs has been its greatest contribution to the world. Its contribution to global economic growth has been around 30 per cent.

However, we remain sober about our achievements and believe that China remains a developing country; there is still a long way to go before China achieves modernization. We will continue to give priority to development and pursue comprehensive social and economic growth, maintain a medium-high speed of economic growth and move to a medium-high level of development. China will continue to promote development through deepening reform.

Reform has held the key to our previous achievements in development, and the same will hold true for the future. We will promote development through expanding our opening-up policy. China's experience in past decades proves that a closed-door policy only leads to stagnation and backwardness, and it is opening up that brings development and prosperity. With a firm commitment to the win-win strategy of opening up, China will open its door even wider to the outside world.

China will promote development by upholding peace. The prolonged sufferings of war have made the Chinese people cherish peace more than ever. As a dedicated follower of the path of peaceful development, China will pursue friendship and cooperation with all countries on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. We uphold a mutual respect among all countries, regardless of their size.

China also believes in working through dialogue, negotiation and friendly consultation to address disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests. We need to expand common ground, shelve differences and make continuous contributions to regional peace and stability.

China has always worked for the peaceful settlement of hotspot issues. On the occasion of this year's session of the General Assembly, China will provide $300 million worth of humanitarian assistance to relevant countries and international organizations. Additionally, China will provide assistance on all fronts to the underdeveloped and least developed countries.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion. We need to run our own affairs effectively while working to fulfil our due international responsibilities. By the end of 2015, China had contributed a total of over ¥400 billion to 166 countries and international and regional organizations and provided training in various sectors to over 12 million professionals from other developing countries. Going forward, China will strengthen cooperation with other developing countries and do whatever it can to help African countries and the least developing countries.

China will increase its support and assistance to other countries only as our economy grows. We stand ready to work with all countries to achieve common development and prosperity and to support sustainable development and international cooperation in relevant fields. By 2020, China will increase its total annual contributions to United Nations development agencies by $100 million over its 2015 contribution level. China is a country that backs its words with action. We will translate our commitments into real actions.

Achieving the goals for sustainable development is our shared task. Transforming our world and making it a better place is the common aspiration of all of us. China stands ready to work with other members of the international community to build a world free from want where development and dignity are ensured for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): In 1981, today's date, 21 September, was proclaimed as the International Day of Peace to promote a negotiated solution to armed conflicts throughout the world. Since 1982, one year later, Colombia has been on a long and difficult road to leave violence behind and attain peace. My predecessors pursued peace for Colombians, each in his own way. This is a task that I undertook on the first day of my Government in August 2010.

I have come to speak to members of the Assembly on seven occasions on the progress and expectations of the peace process between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group — the largest and oldest such group on the American continent. A year ago, standing here before the Assembly (see A/70/PV.16), I said that I expected to return in 2016 as the President of a Colombia in peace — a reconciled Colombia.

After more than half a century of internal armed conflict, I return to the United Nations today, on the International Day of Peace, to announce, with all the strength of my voice and heart, that the war in Colombia has ended. On 24 August in Havana, the negotiators declared that all provisions were complete and adopted the final text of the General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace. Five days later, a bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities took place. As a result, since then there has not been a single death, a single wound or a single bullet fired in the conflict with FARC.

The Agreement will be officially signed in Cartagena de Indias on 26 September. The people of Colombia will approve it through a plebiscite on 2 October. From that moment forward, the former members of the guerrilla group will go to different cantonment areas to begin surrendering their arms to the United Nations within a six-month period, and to begin their reintegration into society.

Their weapons will be melted and will be made into three monuments to peace — one here in New York; one in Cuba, where the peace negotiations took place; and another one in Colombia. These monuments will remind us that the bullets are behind us and that the construction of a new and better country has begun. Joyfully, I reiterate that the last and oldest armed conflict in the western hemisphere has come to an end. The Americas — the two vast American continents with all of their islands, from Patagonia to Alaska — are now a region of peace.

The Agreement that was reached after almost six years of public conversations is the best news for Colombia, Latin America and the world. What does the Agreement mean? Above all, it means that FARC will cease to exist as an armed group and reintegrate into society, and can become a political movement within our democracy. We have agreed on measures to guarantee

its political participation, offer more assurances to the opposition and strengthen democracy and the electoral system in Colombia.

We have also outlined programmes to improve the quality of life of rural inhabitants, who have been the most affected by the conflict, and to make land available to those who do not have it or who lost it because of the war. A central aspect of this peace process is that it has focused on the protection and guarantee of the rights of the victims: the rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition. To that end, we have agreed on such mechanisms as a truth commission, reparation and restoration measures, and a comprehensive transitional justice system.

This is the first time in the history of the resolution of armed conflicts anywhere in the world that a Government and an illegal armed group — through an agreement and not through external imposition — have agreed on transitional justice. The perpetrators of international crimes and other serious crimes will be investigated, judged and punished. This has been positively highlighted by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and many other organizations and experts. We are sure that this model of justice, which is framed within a comprehensive system to guarantee the rights of the victims — as established by the Rome Statute — will be a useful precedent for future peace processes.

I should like to highlight another aspect of the Agreement. We know that drug trafficking has fueled war in Colombia and around the world. Thanks to the Agreement, FARC is committed to severing all ties with this activity and to cooperating, through concrete actions, to combat this phenomenon. This is highly symbolic, as those who once protected illicit coca crops will now work with the State in eradicating them.

A similar process will be take place with regard to the anti-personnel mines that have killed and mutilated so many soldiers, police officers, farmers and children. The State and FARC will work jointly to demine all of the national territory. That will also have significant environmental benefits not only for our country, but also for the planet. To the extent that illegal crops are replaced with legal ones, the deforestation caused by coca cultivation will stop. No longer will millions of barrels of oil spill into our rivers and oceans because of attacks on our oil infrastructure. We will be able to better take care of and preserve the natural lung that is the Amazon.

A new Colombia greets the international community today. It is a Colombia full of hope, a Colombia that, without war, is ready to reach its highest potential and to be a positive factor in the global context. It is a Colombia where the resources that used to finance war will now be better used on education, health and security for its citizens. It is a Colombia that opens its arms to the world and welcomes investment, trade and tourism.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Sustainable Development Goals have already been adopted into law in our country. We were the first country to do so. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is now before Congress to be enacted into law. Peace will undoubtedly allow us to achieve these transformative commitments with greater ease and effectiveness.

Today, on behalf of almost 50 million Colombians, I express our deepest gratitude to the international community for its ongoing and tireless support for peace in Colombia. We thank Cuba, the host of the dialogues, and Norway, which were guarantors of the peace negotiations, as well as Chile and Venezuela, which accompanied the entire process. I thank the United States, Germany and the European Union, which appointed special envoys to accompany the dialogues.

We especially thank the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council, which established a political mission to lead the monitoring and verification of the ceasefire and the disarmament of the guerrillas. I had the opportunity to thank the Council personally a few moments ago (see S/PV.7773). We thank the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, all of which supported this process. We are profoundly grateful to so many Governments, countries and organizations that have continuously expressed their solidarity and willingness to support Colombia in the challenging post-conflict phase that lies ahead of us.

I can say today, in this historic Hall, that we have succeeded for Colombians and the world. Colombia is turning the page of war to start writing the chapter of peace. That is what we wish for the rest of the planet. Therefore, we offer our full solidarity to the nations that have suffered and continue to suffer from the scourge

of global terrorism. The example of Colombia should give hope to the world that it is possible to achieve the dream of peace when there is will and commitment. To that end we must first disarm spirits and language, because words can be as harmful as bombs. We have to take in and protect the victims and the most vulnerable, including the thousands of human beings that flee war to seek opportunities beyond their borders. Colombia is more than ready to continue supporting the raison d'être of the United Nations — the search for peace in the world.

As President of Colombians, I am happy and humbly excited to announce to the Assembly the peace in Colombia. A conflict of over half a century — a conflict that left more than 220,000 people dead and claimed more than 8 million victims — has come to an end. The bells of peace are ringing in Colombia and their echo is heard by all the nations represented in this Hall. We do not want more war. We do not want more wars, not in Colombia and not in the rest of the world. Today we have a reason for hope. There is one less war on the planet, and that is the war in Colombia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mahama: Allow me to first congratulate you, Ambassador Peter Thompson, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to assure you of Ghana's support and cooperation during this session and throughout your tenure. I congratulate also Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his selfless and dedicated service to our Organization over the past ten years and on his achievements during his tenure of office. His time as Secretary-General has witnessed some key defining moments for the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, development and human rights, and I commend him for his leadership.

I am President of the Republic of Ghana. I was born one year after my country gained independence from colonial domination in 1957. I was born in the same year as Michael Jackson, whose untimely tragic death shocked the whole world. Michael was also known as the king of pop and was one of the greatest entertainers who ever lived. The words of his 1991 hit song "Heal the World" continue to echo to us from his grave. Michael Jackson sang, "Heal the world. Make the world a better place for you and for me, and the entire human race".

His song was released in 1991, at a time of excitement for the world. In the 58 years of my life, I have seen the world change more rapidly than in the millions of years of its existence. My life has spanned the excitement of the post-war era, the heady days of our liberation from colonial rule in Africa, the Apollo moon landing, the Cold War, the excitement at the fall of the Berlin wall, the era of globalization, the end of apartheid, the global progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Arab Spring, Brexit, China's slowdown, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, cyberattacks — and the list goes on and on.

Our world today is more complicated than it has ever been. The question I ask is: what happened to the ideals that gave birth to the United Nations? What happened to the enthusiasm that captured the spirit of the post-war world, which envisioned peace, safety and security for all humankind? What happened to our excitement at the thawing of the Cold War; to our joy at the collapse of apartheid?

The era of the Cold War created a paradoxical safety and security. The bipolar world and the arms race assured mutual destruction from any nuclear war, and therefore the world was a more predictable place. Those of us in developing countries hid behind our shield of the Non-Aligned Movement. We marched against nuclear armaments and envisioned the day that the nuclear arms race would end, so that the trillions of dollars that were being spent by the super-Powers

on nuclear weapons would yield a dividend that would create a life of prosperity for all people on Earth.

President Reagan stood before the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin in 1987 and said "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." In President Reagan's words, walls cannot withstand faith, walls cannot withstand truth, and w lls cannot withstand freedom. The fall of the Berlin Wa'l opened a vision of a new world — the era of globalization; an age where trade and interaction among people of the world would spread prosperity across the globe. It did, to some extent. The rise of the Asian tigers; the emerging world of China, Brazil, South Africa and India; the turn of the millennium and the Millennium Development Goals raised millions of people out of poverty.

A young man in West Africa drops out of school and takes to selling petty items along the streets of the city. In agreement with four of his friends, they decide to raise money and try to make it to the greener pastures of Europe. They pay their way through the Niger and arrive at Agadez, whence they brave the trek of death. This is a dangerous hike across the harshest desert on Earth — the Sahara. They are attacked by bandits along the way and robbed of all their money and provisions. They are rescued by some Good Samaritans.

Two members of their group do not make it through the desert crossing. After months of living under the threat of death from many armed groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in Libya, they finally board an overloaded dinghy bound for Italy. Rescued from the sea after their dinghy capsizes, only one of them remains, held in a refugee detention centre in Italy. He is the lucky one — the only one of five friends to survive the perilous journey. How long he will remain in the detention centre, he does not know.

This could be the story of any young African seeking a better life in Europe. All over the world, there are new walls being built — walls that imprison us and block us from the rest of the world. The young African refugee in an Italian detention centre is facing one new such wall. In many parts of the world, extremist forces have hijacked the dialogue, and among the millennial generation all available cutting-edge technology is used to spread anxieties that evoke fear and arouse our basest emotions.

Hate speech is becoming common. People complain of being tired of being politically correct. In many places, xenophobia has taken over rational thinking. In the vote on Brexit, the spectre of a flood of Syrian refugees was used as the instrument for propelling the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. It is a paradox of our world that nearly 30 years after President Reagan called for the Berlin Wall to be torn down, new walls are springing up everywhere.

Yet we have the resources in this world to guarantee each person a decent life. In the implementation of the MDGs, despite the minimal resources that were injected by the wealthy nations, we managed by prioritizing our spending to put more children in school than ever before in history. We managed to pull more than 40 per cent of the world's people out of extreme poverty. In Valletta, the European Union put €1.8 billion into an emergency fund to cooperate with Africa in the curbing of unregulated migration, and yet with Africa's significant share of the world's arable lands, a youthful labour force and a significant share of the world's natural resources, a reordering of economic relations could create boundless opportunities that would keep young Africans at home, not risking their lives on these perilous journeys. Removing subsidies for farmers of the advanced world would create an even playing field for African farmers to compete. Removing revenue and non-revenue barriers to African produce would give African agriculture a fighting chance.

Some of the young Africans who hazard the desert and the Mediterranean Sea to cross to Europe from my country are young poultry farmers or other entrepreneurs who sell their shops and undertake the journey because they can no longer compete with the tons of frozen chicken dumped on African markets annually, or with the adverse business environment they have to face. Africa does not need sympathy or overseas development assistance. Africans need a fair chance to trade with the rest of the world and among ourselves.

The progress towards the creation of a continental free-trade area is commendable and must be fast-tracked. Raising intra-African trade alone from the paltry average of 15 per cent would create better opportunities for Africa's youth. We can achieve a lot in collaboration with the rest of the world, and yet we must realize that a lot also rests within our own capacity to achieve as Africans. Recently, I took the decision as President of Ghana to allow citizens of other African countries travelling to Ghana to obtain visas on arrival. This would stimulate trade and investment if it were replicated across the entire continent.

Structural reforms are required in many areas. Governance is also a critical area that requires reform in Africa. Democracy unleashes the creative juices of our citizens. Africa has made remarkable progress. Elections are held regularly, civil society groups and think tanks have become more vocal, and the media is increasingly free. Yet there is a lot more that we can do to allow Africans the space to express themselves. Democracy is not a one-size-fits-all system; different countries are at different stages of the democratic journey. Democracy evolves and cannot be forced on the people. It does not help for bigger Powers to proselytize democracy across the continent. It can have negative consequences, as we are experiencing in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. But still, a properly functioning peer system can avoid some of the meltdowns we are experiencing in some African countries due to a desire to remain in office interminably.

The mistake with Africa is that we are seen as a homogenous unit and treated as such. It is not acknowledged that we are a whole continent with different aspirations, cultures, democracies and economic developments. Human progress is not a seamless movement forward. It encompasses periods of reversal, mistakes, fumbling and even falling. All parts of the world have been through this and learned from their mistakes. They have picked themselves up after a fall and continued moving. Africa must be allowed the same latitude.

A few years ago the term "Africa Rising" painted a picture of a continent on the move. Recent headwinds experienced due to the China slowdown and the collapse of commodity prices have caused some sceptics of Africa to once again gloat about the notion that nothing good can come out of the continent. Africa is a continent of 54 countries at different stages of progress and development. There must be room for us to make our mistakes and learn from them. Africa has the potential to be the next continent on the rise. It has a lot going for it. The continent has many success stories. Africa has the fastest growing population, and thus a very youthful labour force; the fastest growing middle class, with increasing disposable incomes; and the fastest growing information and communication technology networks in the world.

Africa needs strengthened institutions and we are working to build them. We must engrain transparency and integrity more and more into our governance systems. President Obama said on his historic visit to Ghana that what Africa needs is strong institutions. We must strengthen our institutions of governance to eliminate the incidence of corruption that impoverishes our people.

My country, Ghana, is a part of Africa's success story. I am proud of my country. We are variously called the "model of democracy" in Africa or the "beacon of democracy". We have not looked back since the adoption of our 1992 Constitution. Successive elections, with power occasionally swinging between opposing political parties, have established Ghana's democratic credentials in the world. A strict two-term limit for the President guarantees that every eight years a new person will be in charge.

Ghana has a fiercely independent media, with hundreds of newspapers and radio stations. I always say jokingly to my colleagues that in Ghana I have 27 million Presidents, all of whom know my job better than I do. Every morning on the political talk shows across the country, my fellow citizens can be heard coaching me on how to do my job and what my responsibilities are as President.

Bold measures in effecting structural reforms have yielded a more stable and resilient economy, with a deficit-to-gross domestic product (GDP) target of 4.9 per cent this year, among other favourable targets. With a stable currency, business confidence is rising and foreign direct investment remains very strong. Ghana has been chugging along at a respectable average of about 6 per cent GDP growth rate over the past decade. With the structural reforms we have undertaken, in collaboration with our development partners, and new developments in our offshore oil and gas prospects, Ghana is predicted to clip along from next year at a respectable 8 per cent growth per annum.

Over the past decade, we have invested heavily in expanding our socioeconomic infrastructure. Investments in health care, education, power, water, roads and ports are yielding significant dividends for us and creating more employment opportunities for our young people. These investments are yielding dividends in improved health care, increased enrolment at all levels of the educational ladder, improved transportation systems and the growth of the small and medium enterprises.

With the modest progress we are making, we are able to recapture the vision of the founder of our nation. It is a happy coincidence that on his birth anniversary

today, I have the opportunity to address the world from the prestigious rostrum of the General Assembly. Today, 21 September, marks the birthday of Kwame Nkrumah. Many African leaders of our current generation draw inspiration from him. President Kwame Nkrumah was a champion of African liberation and a staunch Pan-Africanist. I wish all my country men and women a happy Founder's Day.

Two years ago, I stood on this stage (see A/69/PV.9) and in my capacity as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States called for urgent action to halt the spread of the Ebola virus disease, which was ravaging three of our West African neighbours and threatening to spread across the whole subregion. Today, I stand here to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations for their prompt response in setting up the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), which was based in Ghana. UNMEER will probably go down in the history of the United Nations as one of the most successful and effective missions ever deployed by the Organization. I also salute the international community for its effective response in the form of logistics, personnel, medication and other material that helped to snuff out the disease in a relatively short time.

My particular commendation goes to the brave volunteers, including 41 of my own countrymen, who risked their lives by going into the infection zone to assist in the fight against the disease. Ghana remains proud of its contribution towards ending that crisis and of its support to the United Nations system and the international community when we made our country the staging post for the international response and the United Nations Mission on the Ebola Emergency Response, despite the threats.

Following the Ebola response, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and I wrote to the Secretary-General calling for the establishment of a high-level panel to prepare a report that would allow the world to respond better in times of such global health crises. We are faced with such a situation already in respect of the exponential spread of the Zika virus. We must use the lessons learned from the Ebola crisis to confront that new threat.

Another threat we must confront together as a united world is the threat of terrorism. No part of the world is safe. In our subregion, the activities of Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin have displaced millions of people and claimed thousands of casualties. Attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire show that all our countries are at risk. Terrorism is one of the gravest threats to world peace and security today.

We cannot be under any illusion about the imminent threat to all of us even as we go about our daily activities. But the solution is not to shut our doors to foreigners who may have genuine cause for visiting, including tourism, business or sanctuary as refugees. That is what the terrorists want to us to do; they seek to instil fear and panic in us in order that we shut our doors on the rest of the world. Ghana stands in solidarity with all countries that have experienced terrorism recently: Bangladesh, Belgium, France, Germany, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States of America. No, we must not give in to them. The terrorists must not win, they cannot win and they will not win.

I wish to commend the United States and Cuba for the progress made in thawing the relations between the two neighbours. We have all been watching with excitement the removal of some of the last vestiges of the Cold War with the reopening of embassies in the two capitals, President Obama's historic visit and the resumption of flights between the two countries. The time has come to take the remaining steps to completely lift the blockade on Cuba. I hope that this can be achieved before President Obama's Administration leaves office.

Ghana once again wishes to reiterate its support for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is no military solution to this conflict. Israel's security can be guaranteed only by a peaceful and stable Palestinian State coexisting side by side with Israel. Unfortunately, the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands continues to make such a solution more and more difficult to attain.

Last September, we convened in this very Hall and made a commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is an ambitious yet achievable Agenda whose Goals and Targets go far beyond the imperatives of economic growth by tackling the root causes of poverty and deprivation and delivering on the social and environmental dimensions of development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development not only marks the beginning of a new and even more promising phase in our trajectory as a

global body, but also challenges us to develop new and innovative partnerships that I believe will guarantee progress evenly across regions and for all people. The 17 Goals and 169 Targets underscore the underlying values of the United Nations, as enshrined in its Charter, and provide renewed impetus to its activities in sustaining peace, preserving our planet, ensuring socioeconomic justice and safeguarding the dignity of mankind.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals represent four important, mutually reinforcing landmark agreements that open a new chapter in global development towards ensuring prosperity for our people and preserving our planet.

I am impressed by the level of commitment that the United States and China, two of the major emitters of greenhouse gases, have shown by agreeing to ratify the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I hope that this will be the catalyst that brings the Agreement into force, and state that we, as a generation, are unequivocally committed to bequeathing a better world to future generations. We must not fail to do this. As leaders, we are also responsible for moving beyond setting norms to delivering on our commitments at the national, regional and global levels. If we do not achieve them all simultaneously, it must not be for want of effort.

I am particularly honoured to co-chair the Secretary-General's advocacy group in support of the SDGs. While we acknowledge that national leadership and ownership are critical, global partnerships are needed for financial resources, policy advice and technical assistance. I am happy to inform you, Mr. President, that Ghana has begun work in earnest to implement the SDGs. We will establish the necessary national structures to ensure that the policies and measures taken in that regard fall in line with our 40-year development plan, currently being formulated. I have also signed the ratification instrument of the Paris Agreement and will take part in the event today depositing Ghana's instrument with the United Nations.

The Security Council remains an important source of legitimacy for international action on peace and security. While Africa accounts for close to one third of the membership of the United Nations and nearly two thirds of the work of the Council, it remains woefully underrepresented in the permanent and non-permanent category. Eleven long years after the African Union adopted the Ezulwini Consensus, we are nowhere near achieving a more equitable reform of the Security Council. That will continue to remain a scar on the conscience of this world body if not remedied as quickly as possible.

Ghana is a leading democracy in Africa. I stand before the world today to declare that, just as we have done in the past, my country will go to the polls this December, and the processes before, during and after will mark a further consolidation of Ghana's credentials as a leading world democracy.

In conclusion, let me once again express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his extraordinary leadership during his tenure as Secretary-General. The people of Ghana, my wife and I wish the Secretary-General and Mrs. Ban Soon-taek well in their future endeavours. It is my wish that history record our time here in this Hall as one that gave reality to Michael Jackson's song: "heal the world/make the world a better place for you and for me/and for the entire human race."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Sarwar Danesh, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Sarwar Danesh, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Sarwar Danesh, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Danesh (Afghanistan) (*spoke in Dari; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my distinct pleasure to attend the seventy-first session of the

General Assembly. I sincerely congratulate Ambassador Peter Thomson of the Republic of Fiji on having been elected to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts and wise leadership in support of fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and justice for all over a decade. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The twenty-first century has brought with it an ever-complex international arena, in which certain old conflicts have lingered and been exacerbated, while new threats and challenges — in the form of violent extremism and terrorism, displacement and migration, climate change and other challenges — have emerged, threatening all of humankind. We have come to realize that dialogue and cooperation provide the most viable avenue to promote peace and security and ensure a world without hatred and conflict.

We believe that the United Nations remains the single most important international body for promoting global peace, security and prosperity, and that achieving a stronger Organization remains a priority for all of us in the way forward. The United Nations vital role in helping Afghanistan to transition into a democratic and pluralistic society is a clear example of its profound impact in helping to create real change for bettering societies and communities around the world. Allow me to update the Assembly on the current state of affairs in my country.

While two years have passed since the establishment of the Government of National Unity of Afghanistan, I would like to briefly present an overview of the achievements of my Government under the leadership of Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, the elected President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. We in Afghanistan aim to strengthen the spirit of national participation and cooperation so as to take into account the wishes and will Afghan citizens. Based on national consensus, all groups, political figures and Afghan elites inside and outside the Government are jointly sharing ideas now how to strengthen the political system and the Government of National Unity and to implement reforms within the framework of our national interests.

The Afghan nation has inherited a legacy of conflict, oppression, discrimination and inequality. We believe that democracy is the best solution to these problems, as it provides the only foundation to ensure justice and equality and to enable social and political groups to be adequately represented. We have a modern Constitution that provides for this goal, and only its full implementation can ensure political stability in our society.

Our Government has registered considerable achievements in different areas over the past two years, including in reducing maternal and child mortality, increasing access to education, improving basic freedoms, strengthening the telecommunications and information sectors, improving the rule of law and preserving justice and human rights. Internationally, our Government enjoys its due status, having proved to be a trustworthy partner to the many countries that are engaged in Afghanistan and invested in the security and stability of the country.

We are sparing no effort to implement our commitments to reform. We are pursuing our well-planned and systematic efforts to eliminate corruption, strengthen good governance, undertake judicial reform, promote women's empowerment, ensure effective service delivery for our citizens and accountability standards at all levels of Government, institutionalize merit-based appointments of senior officials and secure transparency in Government contracts, with the establishment of the National Procurement Authority.

In order to strengthen transparency of our future parliamentary, presidential and district council elections, the process of consultations and technical and legal studies on reforming our electoral bodies and laws have been concluded, and initial steps towards electoral reforms will begin very soon.

Combating the threat of narcotics is another priority of the National Unity Government. In this regard, we are cooperating closely with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other international partners, and will maintain our joint efforts within the national action plan framework.

At the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit in July, NATO members and our other allies pledged to provide $1 billion in support on an annual basis for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) until the end of 2020. The Resolute Support Mission, which offers support in training, advice and assistance to ANDSF, was also extended beyond 2016. We extend a particular debt of gratitude to the United States of America for providing the largest share of support.

In less than two weeks time, Afghanistan and our international partners will come together at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan to review, and reach important decisions on, the full scope of the joint partnership in the way forward. The National Unity Government will present a comprehensive update on the positive trajectory of our reform efforts, conducted on the basis of the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We look forward to our international partners making new pledges of assistance on the basis of Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework.

Despite these achievements, the ongoing undeclared war against Afghanistan and the need for security remain a serious challenge for the National Unity Government, as our people are still subject to the merciless attacks of terrorist groups. Currently, more than 10 terrorist groups, sent from outside the country with the goal of impeding our State-building efforts and preventing the establishment of peace and stability, are fighting against us in Afghanistan. One of their main objectives is to suppress democracy, freedom of speech, and our free and independent media. That is why our journalists are subject to serious threats while reporting from the battlefields and during terrorist attacks. Afghanistan asks the United Nations to appoint a special representative for the safety of journalists, focused on protecting all journalists, including those serving in Afghanistan.

Over the past several months, terrorist groups, including the Taliban and Da'esh, which continue to enjoy foreign support, have attacked a peaceful and civil demonstration of the Enlightenment Movement in Deh Mazang square in Kabul, and killed dozens of our educated youth and elite. They have also attacked the American University of Afghanistan and other civilian facilities, killing hundreds of innocent civilians. Based on existing evidence, these attacks were planned and organized from the other side of the Durand Line, inside Pakistani territory.

This year, the Taliban has tried to take control of more areas in the country, especially in Kunduz and Helmand provinces, but have been confronted by the ANDSF. As a result, hundreds of extremist militants of the Taliban and Da'esh, many of whom were foreign fighters, were killed or captured. We call on the international community to focus on eliminating terrorist safe havens located outside of the country. We urge States to honestly implement their international pledges in the fight against terrorism and to avoid the dual policy of distinguishing between good and bad terrorists, which undermines the international order.

Where were the previous leaders of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda residing, and where were they killed? At this very moment, where are the leaders of the Taliban and the Haqqani network located? Where and how are terrorists being trained, equipped and financed to wage a full-scale war? We have repeatedly asked our neighboring country Pakistan to destroy the known terrorist safe havens, but we have unfortunately yet to witness any change in the situation. Afghanistan has always desired peaceful relations with all countries of the region, but the Government of National Unity reserves the right to do whatever is necessary to defend and protect our people.

We have also kept the doors of peace and negotiations open to those Taliban elements and other armed opposition groups that are willing to renounce violence, return to peaceful life and adhere to our Constitution. In this connection, a peace agreement is about to be signed between our Government and the Hezb-e-Islami party. That will be an important step for progress in our peace process.

We believe that the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process — composed of Afghanistan, the People's Republic of China, Pakistan and the United States — can remain a useful platform to further peace efforts so long as the Government of Pakistan acts in good faith to meet and fulfil its commitments within the parameters of the Group's road map.

Despite our security challenges, Afghanistan has always maintained a positive approach to our relations with all regional countries and the Islamic world. We consider Islamic countries to be our best partners and seek to strengthen our cultural, social and economic ties and to use our experience to promote peace and coexistence and present a moderate interpretation of Islam. In this regard, we welcome the express readiness of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and any Islamic country to help promote the peace agenda in Afghanistan. I would add that Islam is a religion with a clear thought, culture, civilization and history that respects human dignity, rights and freedoms, and derives national sovereignty from the will of the people. It is also against any kind of injustice, exclusivism, hatred, radicalism and violence.

Those individuals and groups that resort to violence, terror and killing under any name are not acquainted with the spirit of this humane religion, and are in fact using Islam only as a tool to achieve their evil goals. How can Islam possibly permit terrorism and suicide attacks, or the taking of the lives of thousands of innocent people, when it clearly considers the human individual to be the representative of God on Earth, assigning him dignity and offering him heavenly insight in the holy verses of the Quran? Islam also considers the killing of one innocent human to be equal to killing all humankind. We expect the prominent Islamic scholars who will soon take part in an important conference in the holy city of Mecca to further elucidate the true image of Islam and declare their condemnation of terrorists and extremists on behalf of our great religion.

In order to achieve regional cooperation, we need a stable region. Afghanistan's foreign policy is founded on the creation of a secure economy-based society. Afghanistan is an active member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the European Community Humanitarian Office, as well an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and seeks to play an active role in the revitalization of the Regional Cooperation Agenda within the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

Afghanistan and all countries of its region share common threats and common interests. We should come together and cooperate in the fight against our common threats, which include terrorism, radicalism, drugs, organized crime, illegal immigration and smuggling. The establishment of a regional railroad, energy transit, mine extraction, trade and transportation infrastructure can provide us with an important opportunity for joint economic cooperation.

Afghanistan, as an important crossroads for trade, transport and economic activities, can connect South Asia to Central Asia, and the Middle East to East and South Asia. Afghanistan has already made significant progress through projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline; the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project; the Lapis Lazuli Corridor; a railway corridor between China, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia; and extended cooperation with Iran regarding Chabahar Port. The implementation of these projects will allow Afghanistan to reach international markets and improve connections between the regional countries.

With respect to the principles of non-interference in the affairs of other countries; avoiding the use of force in the resolution of conflicts; respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty; the exchange of knowledge, science and technology; and, most importantly, the promotion of peace and lasting security and stability, we can prepare for the economic growth of all countries of our region. We therefore call on all our neighbouring countries to cooperate with us in the provision of security and stability throughout the region.

In November 1946, Afghanistan was the first country to become a United Nations Member State after the 51 founding countries, and since then it has solemnly adhered to its international commitments. Over the past 16 years, we have served as a point of convergence at which the international community has been able to come together. In this regard and on behalf of the Afghan nation, I also wish to highlight and thank the United Nations for the central role it has played in facilitating effective international support for the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan. In recent years, we have signed documents for long-term strategic cooperation with 20 of our allies, including the United States, the European Union and NATO, which have announced their valuable support for the policies and decisions of the Afghan Government at important conferences in Bonn, Tokyo, London, Chicago and Warsaw.

Afghanistan, like other members of the international community, is serious and resolute in its fight against radicalism and violence and will continue to battle this ominous phenomenon. For years, our nation has been on the front line of the fight against terrorism and has made tremendous sacrifices in defence of the common values of humanity. We have lost many of our great national figures, including the martyrs Ahmad Shah Massoud, Ustad Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ustad Abdul Ali Mazari and Abdul Haq, as well as hundreds of ulamas, Members of Parliament, officers, journalists and members of our political elites.

We believe that terrorism and radicalism have become global threats to world peace. We have seen signs of radicalism emerge in different forms throughout Europe and America and incidents of terrorist attacks in many countries around the world. Given the extent of these threats, the measures taken by the international community in the fight against terrorism and radicalism will never be sufficient or successful unless effective,

comprehensive measures encompassing political, cultural, economic and even military aspects are considered to be a universal strategic necessity.

Ms. Kasese-Bota (Zambia), Vice-President, returned to the Chair.

The United Nations should hold an international conference on the fight against radicalism with the aim of introducing a new legal framework to combat terrorism. We believe that serious efforts in the fight against terrorism and radicalism require thorough and precise planning for at least 20 years. Afghanistan, which is on the front line of this fight, should receive special attention from the international community in this regard.

One of the ominous outcomes of violence and radicalism is the new wave of immigration over the past year, which has emerged as an important international challenge. We thank those countries that offer support to Afghan immigrants, especially Germany and other European countries that have welcomed Afghan refugees with open arms and a humane, loving spirit. We also ask the United Nations and its Member States to take a new approach towards this international challenge and help countries of origin to address the root causes of and reasons for immigration, particularly the ominous phenomena of war, poverty and illiteracy.

A glimpse into global conditions shows that injustice, threat, violence and conflict are still endangering millions of human lives throughout the world. We have seen devastation and terror in Syria. We announce our full support for a comprehensive solution to the Syrian conflict that reflects the will of all Syrians. We also hope to see a comprehensive and peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen.

We support new international efforts to resolve the issue of Palestine and to provide the brave and noble Palestinian people with their legitimate rights, including the right to have an independent Government. We invite all sides to initiate direct talks so as to achieve a sustainable solution based on the principles of peace and peaceful coexistence.

Afghanistan supports the historic agreement between the 5+1 countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Iranian nuclear programme within the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and views the implementation of the agreement as constructive for the restoration of peace, stability and sustainable development in the region and the world. With regard to nuclear programmes, I should add that we believe that the Democratic Republic of North Korea's tests of nuclear weapons are dangerous for the region and can endanger world peace and security.

Since 2001, when it began a new chapter of its modern history, Afghanistan has regained its historical place among the responsible members of the family of nations represented in the General Assembly. Through words and deeds, we have shown our full and abiding commitment to upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and played our due role in promoting global peace, justice, human rights and the rule of law. It is in that context that we have presented our candidacy to the Human Rights Council for 2018-2020. We call respectfully and amicably on all our friends and Member States to support our candidacy in the upcoming election.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate, on behalf of the Afghan people and Government, our deepest gratitude to all our international partners that have stood beside us in our quest for peace, security and prosperity over the past 16 years, and I especially thank the troops of NATO and the International Security Assistance Force for the sacrifices they have made in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. Together, we have come a long way in our journey, but our task is undoubtedly unfinished. We look to the Assembly's continued support over the coming years and remain confident in realizing the goals that we have jointly set to achieve.

I wish to highlight once again Afghanistan's firm commitment to the realization of a world in which peace, harmony, justice and tranquillity prevail.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sarwar Danesh, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Tusk (European Council): Last year, I stood here to assure the General Assembly that isolationism will never be Europe's policy (see A/71/PV.16). I have not changed my mind, even though the past 12 months have been difficult, not least for the European Union (EU). Europe will always stand for a free and open world governed by the rule of law, in which nations can trade and grow together, instead of living in conflict, mistrust and intrigue. We treat the values upon which the European Union is founded in all seriousness and we have the determination to seek those values in the international arena. If we fail, the world will descend into greater disorder, and the first victims are always the weakest and the poorest.

This Organization is in the process of choosing new leadership. That gives us an opportunity to reflect frankly on the kind of international system that we have today and the one that we want for the future. As a historian, I know why the League of Nations failed in its mission to protect peace and international security. It was paralysed by inertia, fatalism and, finally, by cowardice. As a politician, I can see similar phenomena everywhere today. That is owing to the rise of fear — the fear of war, terrorism and strangers. Globalization makes fear more contagious and more potent. It dangerously links together the anxieties of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and America. One example, among others, is that of the radical Islam of Da'esh, which spreads terror from Jakarta to Nice, from Tunis to Brussels, from Sirte to Orlando.

When fear takes over, nations increasingly turn away from one another. What we need to do here and now is regain a sense of security, which is a fundamental need for every human being, as important as the need for freedom. No challenge shows that as clearly as the issue of refugee protection and the mass displacement of persons across borders. Over the past several months, Europe has been confronted by the refugee crisis to a particularly large degree. Nevertheless, in all our actions aimed at solving the problem of refugees, the European Union is driven by empathy and the readiness to offer help to those in need, even if the world turns its back and pretends not to see. And still today, when we restore order on our external borders and take back control from the smugglers, the readiness to assist refugees in their plight remains our top priority.

That is why we have spent billions of euros to fund humanitarian assistance and are willing to spend much more in the months and years to come. It is our hope and expectation that global solidarity will now kick in to provide health, education and jobs for millions of people currently displaced and scale up resettlement. In the light of that, we support the work that has now begun under the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) to find a sustainable and fair rule book for global migration. The Declaration gives us hope that the principles that have been at the heart of our response will also form the foundation of the global response to the refugee crisis.

Europe is and will be active everywhere that war is imminent or is already raging. Our main goal will always be peace. That as true for civil wars in the Middle East or Africa as it is for nuclear testing and territorial disputes in Asia. It is also true on our own borders on which Ukraine has been attacked by Russia. Further afield, what now concerns us are the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan, in which the very statehood of those countries is in danger. We fully support and stand ready to engage in the work of the United Nations to bring parties to the negotiating table in Syria and in Libya. And in a few weeks, together with the Afghan Government, the European Union will host an international conference in Brussels. It is a unique opportunity for the rest of the world to show that it cares about supporting a stable Afghanistan and the stability of the region as a whole.

This year, we have also witnessed a rising wave of terror worldwide, including against the people of Europe, carried out by many terrorist organizations, in particular by Da'esh. Building a global strategy and network against terrorism is key, including in preventing radicalization and confronting the issues of foreign fighters and terrorist financing. Europe is working with partners from Asia to the Gulf and the Sahel on building up global capacities against violent extremism. We are upgrading our borders to ensure that terrorists cannot pass or re-enter and are working with communities to prevent young people from becoming infected with hatred. This threat will touch all of us sooner or later, which is why we should make better use of the United Nations to fight it together.

The European Union is the world's largest donor of development and humanitarian aid, and that will not change. The Sustainable Development Goals can drive reform of the international system by offering an opportunity to address many problems in one process — insecurity, poverty, underdevelopment, climate change and uncontrolled migration. And, ultimately, we seek a system that ensures that everybody gets his or her fair share of the benefits of globalization.

Lastly, I would like to say a word about the fight against climate change, to which the EU is fully committed. Europe has had a comprehensive climate-change policy in place for years. Right now we are developing laws that will allow us to reach our ambitious target for 2030, and our ratification of the Paris accord will be completed soon. The fact that the two biggest global emitters have ratified the agreement early is a positive sign. It shows that the readiness to take responsibility for our common future is not limited only to Europe. I am hopeful that this trend will become contagious.

Let me say one more thing at the end: I feel that ordinary people sense that a great change is coming. We should listen. We should understand. We should anticipate, not just react. Our job is to bring back a sense of direction, to bring back confidence, to bring back a sense of order. Globalization needs credible rules to make it stable and fair, whether we are talking about trade, migration or security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Poroshenko: On behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I pledge Ukraine's full support for all of his endeavours.

In one of the worst years of the twentieth century, Ernest Hemingway wrote an inspiring humanistic novel. In the epigraph to the novel, he quoted the English poet John Donne:

> "No man is an island,
> Entire of itself,
> Every man is a piece of the continent,
> A part of the main;
> ...
> Any man's death diminishes me,
> Because I am involved in mankind".

These words embodied the essence of the moral and historical transformation that humankind underwent in the wake of the two world wars of the twentieth century.

We entered the third millennium with a strong, new sense of being united, as a humankind for which there is no such thing as "someone else's pain". What has happened to this feeling? Where has it gone? Where has the drive to isolate oneself on an island come from? Why is it that new politicians come to power on various continents calling for ignoring someone else's pain? Why is it that a cynicism not seen since the time of Hemingway's novel has settled into our lives under the guise of pragmatism? What makes evil so strong and good so weak nowadays?

"No man is an island" — this is also about those in power.

This is also about our Organization.

Today the world is experiencing greater and greater instability. Some have been affected more, some less. But never since the end of the Cold War have international norms and principles been unilaterally defied on such a scale and with such brutality. The Charter of the United Nations, the document underpinning our responsibility for maintaining the world order, has never before been questioned. And never before has a Security Council member been a major violator of the United Nations Charter while at the same time being the instigator of, and an active participant in, a conflict, as well as its mediator.

As a result, global instability is no longer the subject of academic debate but is actually the greatest threat facing humankind nowadays. Our future, the future of our children and our Organization, depend directly on how we manage to overcome this threat.

I see only two ways out of this situation: either we recognize the problem and spare no effort to address it on the basis of shared values and principles, or we deceive ourselves with the illusion of stability, turn a blind eye to obvious facts and leave the future of the United Nations — this unique platform for common action — at the mercy of one player that blatantly violates the United Nations Charter.

If we choose the second option, we will soon experience severe disappointment.

The price for this short-sightedness has long been known: it is human lives. In the last century, humankind paid an enormous price following the two World Wars: about 70 million lives. Is that not enough?

Hence, I wish to reiterate that we can no longer afford to have the Security Council deadlocked on key issues of international peace and security. Limiting the use of the veto power in decision-making on conflict prevention and resolution should become a priority task in the context of Security Council reform. The suspension of the use of veto in cases of mass atrocities, as well as in cases in which a Security Council member State is a party to a dispute, should become a rock-solid rule, without exceptions. The Council must become a truly democratic and representative body free from the relics of the past.

There is a critical need to make our Organization capable of addressing effectively acts of aggression and of bringing those responsible to justice. Otherwise, no nation, no State Member of the United Nations can enjoy sustainable security and development.

Another threat to international peace and security that requires the urgent attention of the world community is hybrid wars. As President of a State that has become a testing ground for new methods of hybrid warfare, I have already drawn international attention to this threat at the previous session of the Assembly.

Over the past year, the practice of hybrid warfare has only spread. Its effect has been seen across all of Europe, the United States of America and beyond. Political pressure, blatant propaganda, interference with the electoral process, economic coercion, secret subversive and military operation, cyberattacks, misuse of diplomatic measures — these are modern unconventional methods of undeclared war. It is time for the Security Council to work resolutely and effectively on this issue. Ukraine is ready to further discuss what the Council can do to tackle this threat, and how it can do so.

In view of the recent developments on the Korean peninsula, the future of the nuclear non-proliferation regime is a cause of increased concern for my country. As is well known, Ukraine voluntarily dismantled its own nuclear arsenal — the third largest in the world at the time, with between 2,800 and 4,200 tactical nuclear warheads — in exchange for security, sovereignty and territorial integrity assurances under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances. Regrettably, all these assurances remained exclusively on paper. Let me be frank: we failed to pass the exam with the Budapest Memorandum. The democratic world lost its first battle at that time. It was not only about Ukraine, but also about the credibility of all agreements.

However, Ukraine, as a responsible international actor, has always been and remains a committed advocate of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Thus, the timely and effective action of the international community — the Security Council in the first place — in response to the North Korean nuclear test is one more exam for all of us. We must not allow the world to plunge into a new nuclear arms race. Huge global instability and ever-growing security challenges increasingly demand strong leadership both in States and in international organizations. The United Nations is no exception.

This year, we will appoint the next Secretary-General. I believe that the candidate for this important position, in addition to his or her highly professional skills, must be uncompromising on respect for the Charter of the United Nations and ready to decisively use all tools at his or her disposal, including those provided under Article 99 of the Charter, in case of a threat to peace and security. We expect that both the Security Council and the General Assembly will make the right choice. Ukraine, as a current non-permanent member of the Security Council, will work consistently to this end.

This year, we have witnessed a gruesome series of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Belgium, France, Germany and Ukraine.

This list is unfortunately not even complete. The tentacles of terrorism are wrapping themselves around more countries and continents. It is obvious that such a large-scale threat can be confronted effectively only through joint efforts. In this context, the protection of crucial infrastructure from terrorist attacks should become our joint endeavour. Banking and finance, telecommunications, emergency services, air and railway transportation, and energy and water supply will all be put at risk. Even worse, terrorist attacks may claim numerous victims among civilian populations.

We will continue calling for the Security Council's action in response to this growing problem. In this regard, we welcome the initiative of the United Kingdom to convene a Security Council ministerial meeting to discuss terrorist threats to aviation security (see S/PV. 7775). This should be a powerful signal that the Council is ready to act resolutely to prevent future tragedies — tragedies such as the downing by terrorists of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17 over the Donbas two years ago.

The scrupulous technical investigation carried out by an international team made it possible not only to uncover details but also to put together the whole picture of this horrible crime. Now we have to ensure the proper implementation of the Security Council resolution 2166 (2014), regardless of Russia's shameful veto of the decision to establish an international tribunal under the aegis of the United Nations. The joint team — composed of representatives from Malaysia, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium and Ukraine — continues the criminal investigation. We must set up an efficient mechanism to bring to justice all those responsible for this catastrophe. Our moral duty is to ensure that not only the perpetrators but also the masterminds of this crime, whose orders killed 298 innocent people, are punished appropriately for what they did.

Since 2014, Ukraine has learned from its own tragic experience what foreign-grown terrorism feels like. The terrorist component of the undeclared hybrid warfare that Russia has waged against Ukraine is evident. Dramatically, it has become a daily routine in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. For over two years, Ukraine has received extensive and irrefutable evidence of the direct involvement of Russia, its State agencies and officials in financing, sponsoring, and coordinating terrorist groups that have committed countless crimes against my compatriots.

The shocking reality is that there is an illegal military force of roughly 38,000 in Donbas, and a large part of that is irregulars and mercenaries from Russia. This force is armed to the teeth by Russia. That is no exaggeration. They have at their disposal some 700 tanks, 1,200 armoured vehicles, more than 1,000 artilery systems and more than 300 multiple-launch rocket systems. Russia keeps sending weapons, ammunition and manpower to Ukraine through the uncontrolled part of the Ukrainian-Russian border by road and by rail on a daily basis.

At the same time, the Russian side continues to insist at all forums, including here at the United Nations, that it has nothing to do with all of this and that the Russians are not in Ukraine. No. They are there and even hypocritical Soviet leaders could hardly compete with the outright lies and manipulations deployed by the Kremlin today. Yes, they used to threaten the world with the use of nuclear weapons, just like Russia is doing now. However, when shown the United States intelligence aerial photos, even Khruschev could not but recognize that the Soviet missiles were stationed in Cuba. Today, in response to thousands of available photos, videos, satellite images, eyewitness and other evidence of the Russian military presence in Donbas, Russia only repeats over and over again its cynical recitation: "We are not there".

Russia used to say the same about Crimea — "We are not there" — and then a sham referendum was conducted at Russian gunpoint. A few days ago, a contradictory statement by the Russian President that Crimea was annexed in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. This is hard to imagine. Are we really refering to the same Charter? This is not merely disrespect for the centuries-old principles of international relations, written and unwritten legal and ethical rules. This is a downgrading of diplomacy as such.

I believe that it is time for our Organization to work out serious safeguards against abuses of trust of the world community by some United Nations Member States. It is necessary to elaborate mechanisms to officially document evidence of the aggression of one country against another and to assign clear responsibility to the aggressor, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

This is the third year that the aggression against my country continues to bring pain and suffering to the Ukrainian people. Some 2,430 people have been killed, a significant number of them over the past year. The total death toll this year in this war inflicted on us at the heart of Europe has amounted to 2,500 members of the military and 7,500 civilians. All together, 10,000 people have been killed. Hundreds of hostages remain in unlawful captivity in Donbas and in Russia.

I was shocked to learn that Russia-backed illegal armed formations in the occupied areas of Donbas recently took children as hostages. They showed a video of the interrogation of the teenagers, whom they absurdly accuse of conspiring and carrying out subversive operations. This behaviour is out of place in the twenty-first century. We call on UNICEF to intervene and prevent the abuse and torture of these children.

Another heartbreaking story is one from a few days ago. One Ukrainian hostage volunteer, Volodymyr Zhemchugov, was eventually set free. After one year in captivity without proper medical assistance, this completely blind man without hands said the words that are the quintessence of what is happening in Donbas.

> "I am a native of Donbas, I am an ethnic Russian, a former miner. But people like me in Donbas, patriots of Ukraine, were not fooled by Russian propaganda. We started to resist Russian occupation, to resist the country that set off the war against Ukraine."

However, he expressed the strong belief that soon peace would be restored in his native land, Donbas, and that people will return to their normal life.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize once again that Ukraine remains committed to the settlement of the situation in Donbas by political and diplomatic means. We are a peaceful nation. It was never, under any circumstances, our intention to start any conflicts with our neighbour. Over the past year, we have consistently demonstrated in deed that we are ready to move forward on implementation of the Minsk agreements, the comprehensive peace plan agreed in September 2014 and confirmed in February 2015.

Yet, we have constantly faced the resistance of the Kremlin and its proxies, who do their best to delay the peace process and to shift responsibility for their own destructive actions onto Ukraine. We rely on Russia to abandon this approach to give a chance to the comprehensive settlement. Let me stress again that the Minsk documents entail, by and large, clear guidelines for each side on what must be done. Ukraine has done a lot and will continue doing its part. Now it is time for Russia and its proxies in the Ukrainian Donbas to start implementing their part. Set the captives free, stop shooting, withdraw weapons, let the inspectors of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe carry out their mandate and watch over the Ukrainian-Russian border without any objection or any hindrance, and withdraw Russian weaponry and regular and irregular military units.

The occupying State does not limit itself to combat actions in Donbas only. It also carries on its repressive policy in Crimea. Once thriving and free, now the Crimean peninsula has become a grey zone where people are effectively deprived of all protection. The judicial and penitentiary systems in Crimea have been converted by Russia into a tool of repression. As has been already the case so many times in history, most of the victims are Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians.The latest addition to this picture is the ban by the Russian occupation authorities on the activities of the Mejlis, the self-governing body of the Crimean Tatar people. Add to this the arbitrary detention of Ilmi Umerov, Deputy Head of the Mejlis, in a psychiatric facility for 20 days. In fact, the outrageous practice of punitive psychiatry, which had been widely used by the Soviet repressive machinery, is now back in service for Russia.

We urge Russia to grant unimpeded access to international human rights organizations, both in Crimea and Donbas, and to implement the decision of the UNESCO Executive Board on establishing monitoring in Crimea at the institutional level. The residents of the peninsula must be protected from discrimination and repression. The genocide of the Crimean Tatar people, who already experienced the tragedy of forced deportation 70 years ago, must not be repeated.

In Ukraine, we highly appreciate the contribution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Human Rights Council to addressing the current human rights situation in my country, including in occupied Crimea. This year, we intend to bring this matter to the attention of the General Assembly and to submit a relevant draft resolution on the human rights situation in the territory of the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. This draft resolution will

become an impartial assessment of the human rights situation in the occupied territories by the entire United Nations family.

People in these territories have the right to be protected. Their children have the right to be protected. And it is our responsibility, as the United Nations, to protect them. I appeal to all Member States of the United Nations to support the initiative of Ukraine. We also urge Member States not to recognize the legitimacy of the Russian elections that were held a few days ago in the occupied Crimea. If they do recognize them, it will play into the hands of the aggressor and encourage further repression.

One more problem arising from Russia's occupation of Crimea is its intentions to deploy tactical nuclear weapons and their means of delivery in the occupied peninsula. This would destroy the global system of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and brutally violate Ukraine's non-nuclear status. Moreover, Russia uses temporarily occupied Crimea to project its aggressive policies not only in Ukraine, but also in other corners of the world, including in Syria, where these policies go hand in hand with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today, the entire democratic world is deeply concerned over the human rights violations and dire suffering of the civilian population in Syria.

I believe that the full implementation of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) is vital for the settlement of that protracted and bloody conflict. We draw particular attention to the need to remove the threat of the use of chemical weapons in this country. Our urgent priority is to improve the humanitarian situation and ensure the access of the international humanitarian organizations to Aleppo and other cities in need. We welcome the special meeting of the Security Council on Syria this morning (see S/PV.7774), where I had an opportunity to express our views on this important issue. I hope that this discussion will lead to meaningful decisions and tangible steps towards alleviating the plight of Syrians and bringing about peace.

Africa is yet another continent that continues to suffer from numerous unresolved conflicts and requires our particular attention. It should finally be seen for what it really is — a continent with untapped potential and opportunities for the rest of the world rather than the burden it was for decades, after centuries of colonialism and exploitation. My country will spare no effort to support the African continent, and our African partners can fully count on Ukraine, including within the Security Council.

Despite the ongoing challenges facing Ukraine, my country is fully committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the General Assembly last year. We will continue to work to fulfil our SDG commitments at the national level, particularly those related to ensuring a healthy environment and a sustainable energy supply, promoting gender equality and fighting corruption. As a member of the Friends on Climate Change group, Ukraine contributed to reaching consensus on the universal agreement on climate change. We completed the ratification procedures for the Paris Agreement in a very short time and deposited our ratification instrument during today's high-level event.

This year, we also reached an important milestone, the completion of the United Nations Action Plan on Chernobyl, as well as the end of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions. However, there is a clear need for continued international efforts to mitigate the impact of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and complete the various projects.

I am pleased to note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses migration, currently one of the world's biggest problems. In recent years, we have witnessed unprecedented mass movements of refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It seems hard to imagine, but today there are roughly 65 million forcibly displaced persons around the world, including more than 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum-seekers and 41 million internally displaced persons. Unfortunately, those IDPs include some 1.8 million of my compatriots who have fled the Donbas region, which has been occupied and devastated by Russia.

Unquestionably, our main responsibility is saving our people's lives and protecting those in need. However, to come up with a comprehensive response to that global challenge, we must address its root causes. They include, first and foremost, armed conflict, terrorism, sectarianism and poverty. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which the Assembly just adopted as resolution 71/1, is a first step in that direction. My Government is committed to protecting its IDPs and has taken important measures

to strengthen its national response mechanisms, paying special attention to ensuring that IDPs have the means to live, as well as improving their access to health care, education, housing and employment.

Seventy years ago, Winston Churchill, one of the founding fathers of the United Nations, said at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri:

> "Our difficulties and dangers will not be removed by closing our eyes to them. They will not be removed by mere waiting to see what happens; nor will they be removed by a policy of appeasement."

Those words have not lost their relevance today. Churchill's vision of the United Nations as a vital sinew of peace and an essential policy foundation for international relations that must confront the two giant marauders, war and tyranny, acquires a new reading for our times. He called for us to

> "adhere faithfully to the Charter of the United Nations and walk forward in sedate and sober strength seeking no one's land or treasure, seeking to lay no arbitrary control upon the thoughts of men".

I hope that approach will continue to be a powerful guide for all of us. Moreover, it is the only possible way to preserve our unique Organization and save the world from a new global catastrophe.

The Acting President: On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Petro Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. William Ruto, Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. William Ruto, Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. William Ruto, Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ruto (Kenya): I would like to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Seventy-one years after the founding of the United Nations, we have made significant progress in human development. Inspired by the guarantees in the Charter of the United Nations, people across the world, and in Africa in particular, have achieved freedom and self-determination while expanding democracy. Thanks to the international community's advances in technology and collective action, the world has made remarkable strides in health care, education and agriculture and has eliminated a number of killer diseases. The Cold War is behind us, paving the way for greater opportunities for global synergy. Even among younger nations such as Kenya, technological innovations such as M-Pesa, our mobile phone-based platform for money transfer and financial services, are leapfrogging us into the future, promising greater prosperity and integration.

Yet despite such remarkable strides, human progress is still constrained by a gamut of challenges — inequality within and between nations and regions, prosperity that does not translate into prosperity for all, poverty, violations of human rights, instability and growing environmental fragility. Such momentous challenges call for a collective effort on the part of the community of nations.

Today, Africa's global trade stands at 3 per cent of the world's total. It consists primarily of crude oil, which accounts for 50 per cent, while the remainder is divided between unprocessed minerals and agricultural raw materials. Meanwhile, Africa's population is set to surpass that of India and China combined by 2050. Unless our trade imbalance is reversed, as a matter of urgency, it will accentuate vulnerability, enhance poverty and increase the risk of insecurity and instability for both Africa and the rest of the world. We need to reverse those trends and imbalances.

The global community, cognizant of those challenges, has made important commitments by concluding agreements on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa agreement on the African Union's Agenda 2063. For our part, Kenya has continued to play an active role in leading international efforts. In the course of 2016, we have hosted three important

international conferences seeking sustainable solutions to global challenges.

First, we hosted the second United Nations Environment Assembly in May to discuss current challenges to our global environment. Secondly, Kenya hosted the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in July. The Conference focused on pressing issues related to global trade and economic development. Thirdly, just in the past month, in August, alongside Japan, the African Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank Group, we co-hosted in Nairobi the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development. The Conference addressed specific concerns on how to speed up economic growth, investment and development in Africa in order to help eradicate poverty and promote shared prosperity. We forged good outcomes from all three conferences. I have no doubt that if implemented in full, each of the recommendations made would go a long way towards transforming the world we live in.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the seventieth session ushered in a new era of international development cooperation and development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect our ambition and hope for a better future for ourselves and for our children. We expect that the implementation of the SDGs will result in transformed societies, improved environmental and climatic conditions and global sustained economic growth. For that to happen, however, we also believe that we must eradicate the poverty in our midst by building a fairer global trading system and a more equitable distribution of wealth within and among countries.

It is our belief and expectation that international cooperation will remain at the core of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We therefore note the importance of global partnerships, particularly the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The Partnership has a special role to play in accelerating the delivery of development outcomes as effectively, fairly and efficiently as possible, with particular attention to the least developed countries. We therefore look forward to the second high-level meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation that will take place in Nairobi later this year. I extend a warm welcome to all Member States to attend.

There are certain priorities that the Government of Kenya attaches great importance to in implementing the Kenya Vision 2030, the United Nations 2030 Agenda, and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Among those priorities are issues of youth, women and persons with disabilities. As is the case with Governments in developing countries, the challenge of integrating youth and women in our societies and economies remains a daunting one, but the evidence for us is clear. If we do not succeed at mainstreaming gender and integrating youth into our vision, goals and agendas, we shall fall miserably short of our ambitions. That is why Kenya continues to remain focused on the priorities of youth and women, including building and financing special programmes for their full integration and mainstreaming

In a related matter, the remarkable achievements of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are noteworthy. That is why the Government last week pledged $5 million towards the fifth replenishment cycle of the Global Fund. Moreover, we also pledged $500,000 to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

We are acutely aware that the challenges we face in achieving our aspirations are not only political, economic and social, but also environmental and climatic. The conservation of all wildlife and marine life, as well as the conservation and protection of our oceans, lakes and land ecosystems, including forests and trees outside forests, matters considerably to our future. Our food security and economic prosperity — essentially, our lives — are tied to those matters, which is why we continue to pay great attention to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United Nations forest instruments and the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species.

Kenya welcomes the ongoing preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). We look forward to the Conference and subsequent adoption and implementation of the new urban agenda for the twenty-first century. Kenya recognizes that the future of cities is fully integrated into the achievement of our own Vision 2030 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda. We also believe that a stronger United Nations Habitat is crucial to helping guide the rapid urbanization we are witnessing across the globe. How the international community continues to support the Organization and

how we handle cities throughout the world will be integral to the success of the 2030 Agenda.

Today, our world is confronted by large-scale instability and fragility, which are causing unprecedented human suffering and forced displacement. Furthermore, new security threats — including violent extremism, terrorism and radicalization — threaten to roll back the gains we have made so far. In the Horn of Africa, those factors, together with ecological fragility and natural disasters in the face of scarce resources, have complicated the pursuit of development.

Kenya welcomes the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) and the envisaged comprehensive refugee response framework that will guide the humanitarian response in a more humane, sensitive, timely and compassionate manner. We also take note of and applaud the Secretary-General's convening of the World Humanitarian Summit in May, which refocused the world's attention on the plight of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons. Kenya commits its availability to participate, as always, in discussions that will guide and give a firm way forward to that endeavour.

For the past two and a half decades, the region has been seized with a situation in Somalia. Throughout that time, Kenya has stood with Somalia, provided a safe haven for refugees, joined peacekeeping missions and invested heavily in resources to combat Al-Shabaab and its affiliates. That solidarity has helped to substantially weaken Al-Shabaab, liberate large swaths of land in Somalia and provide space for the Somali Government to begin the journey of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

It is in that context that the Government of Somalia has strongly expressed its willingness to receive its citizens who are currently refugees — not just in Kenya, but in other parts of the world. For its part, Kenya has committed to $10 million this year to support the safe, orderly, voluntary and dignified repatriation of more than 400,000 Somali refugees living in Kenya. Sadly, the efforts of the region and of Somalia's neighbours have not been matched by the commitment of the international community.

Instead of supporting that regional effort this year, our partners, including the European Union, cut support for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) by 20 per cent, while security experts were suggesting a budgetary increase for AMISOM in order to procure ground troops to secure Somalia. Despite repeated appeals, the Security Council has failed to provide adequate, predictable funding or force multipliers for AMISOM. I once again implore members of the Security Council to take the matter seriously and align the mandate of AMISOM to the threat levels in Somalia on land, air and sea.

With regard to repatriation, since 2012 the international community has pledged upwards of $500 million to support Somalia in its reconstruction and repatriation efforts. It is unfortunate than under 2 per cent has been received. That failure of solidarity has placed a disproportionate burden on Somalia's neighbours and risks undermining all efforts concerning refugees, helping Somalia rebuild and managing the ongoing elements of terrorism and extreme radicalization.

As Somalia moves into its next phase of political transformation, the Vision 2016 programme remains the best course of action for the country. However, the success of the post-2016 period will largely depend on how the current electoral process is managed. Somalia requires the full support and commitment of the international community in order to complete the process of political transition that will set the stage for a peaceful and prosperous Somalia.

The road to peace and security in South Sudan has been long and difficult. Sadly, recent events and developments threaten to plunge the country, and indeed the entire region, into a security and humanitarian crisis. Kenya, as a guarantor of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, has been spearheading the search for sustainable peace and continues to make significant investments in efforts to build peace in South Sudan.

I call upon the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to honour their commitment and work towards its full implementation. That is the only basis for durable peace and reconciliation in that troubled country. The efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), buttressed by the African Union Peace and Security Council, have been vital to these processes. The history of conflict resolution demonstrates that regional mechanisms are the best avenues towards sustainable outcomes. It is therefore imperative that

the international community channel its efforts and support through IGAD.

Last year, here at the United Nations, Kenya made pledges during the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping. I would like to confirm today that Kenya has indeed lived up to every pledge it made. The first engineering capability troop training for African peacekeepers is ready and has been completed in Nairobi. That was done with the collaboration of our own Kenyan defence forces and the United Nations and with support from the good Governments of Japan and Switzerland.

Kenya reaffirms its commitment to continuing to provide training facilities for United Nations programmes, as part of its pledge to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping operations. Kenya, as the current Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, has been at the forefront of advocating for a new peacebuilding architecture for sustainable peace throughout the world. That is why, later today, Kenya will co-host a pledging conference to boost the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund. For us, the message is clear — if we are to ever enjoy a peaceful world for all, we cannot invest any less in peacebuilding than we do in peacekeeping. Today, in the pledging conference, the Government of Kenya will pledge $100,000 to the Peacebuilding Fund.

While we build the peacebuilding architecture, we must also dedicate greater efforts to rebuilding and transforming the United Nations system as a whole. We need to transform our global Organization into a more effective and responsive entity that reflects the complex challenges and realities of the twenty-first century.

With regard to the Security Council, Kenya, as a member of the Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council, is deeply concerned that progress towards addressing the historical injustice in the representation of the African continent and its people on the Council remains not only slow but unpromising.

The seventy-first session must achieve greater progress on that matter. I take this opportunity to request that President Thomson prioritize the appointment of the next chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, who will preside over a year of real progress on that matter. It cannot be that, in a world where democracy is the standard norm and accepted practice, the single largest body in the world, the United Nations, plays by different rules. It cannot be that one or two or five individuals can hold ransom the seven billion people living in the world. It is accepted that democracy is the basic standard for any meaningful engagement in any part of the world, in any country or any self-respecting organization.

In the same light, we urge the continued strengthening of the United Nations global footprint in general and of the United Nations Office in Nairobi in particular. That will increase the relevance of the United Nations and enhance its legitimacy in the global South.

Similarly, the seventy-first session must remain seized of the two-State solution as the best way out of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis. Kenya supports the vision of two peaceful, prosperous, brotherly States living side by side.

Finally, after ten highly successful years, the time has come for us to bid farewell to Mr. Ban Ki-moon as Secretary-General. Mr. Ban has been a great steward of the international community, a humble and dedicated Secretary-General to Member States, a standard bearer of human rights, a champion of development and climate change and a friend of not just Africa, but Kenya. On behalf of the Government and people of Kenya, I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to him for his friendship and his hard work. We wish him and his wife well in their future pursuits.

As the international community now finally moves onto the last stage of selecting a new Secretary-General, it is my fervent hope that the Security Council will exercise its responsibility in selecting a new Secretary-General in a manner that will reflect our collective concerns for the development agenda, for world peace and cohesion and for the key challenges that continue to face our collective enterprise of building a better world and a better future for all of us and for our children.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William Ruto, Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Prince Mohammed (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I wish him every success in his endeavours.

Since its participation in the establishment of the United Nations, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made every possible effort to achieve the noble purposes to which we all aspire. Today, under the leadership of His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, we are doing our utmost to contribute to the maintenance of peace, security and stability, not only in our region but throughout the world.

We attach great importance to combating terrorism. We were the among the earliest victims of terrorism. In 1992, we were subjected to more than 100 terrorist operations, including 18 operations perpetrated by elements linked to a country of the region. Even before the events of September 2011, the Kingdom worked on an agreement among Arab countries to combat terrorism. We have been and are still waging a war to combat terrorist organizations. We have also joined more than 12 international agreements, and, in partnership with the United States and Italy, we are co-chairing the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Moreover, in order to rectify the extremist thinking among some individuals, we have established the Mohammed bin Naif Counseling and Care Center to provide care and to criminalize terrorism and its funding.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is home to many Islamic religious sites. We were the first to condemn the terrorist attacks of 11 September. We have expressed our solidarity with the United States and we have sought to uproot terrorism. Security forces in the Kingdom have been able to uncover 268 terrorist operations before they took place, including operations against friendly countries. We find it odd that in the United States there is an attempt to ratify a law on sovereign immunity, which will have negative repercussions.

We believe that fighting terrorism requires international participation and an international partnership. We need concerted efforts at all levels in order to counter terrorism at the security, intellectual, financial and military levels. We also stress that fighting terrorism requires cooperation based on the rules and principles for which this Organization was established.

We also wish to commend the role of the Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism, which was established in Riyadh by 40 Islamic countries. We have provided all possible support and facilities to the command centre so that it can lead the efforts to combat terrorism. We hope the international community will participate in supporting this international centre to combat terrorism.

The international community must take all possible measures to put an end to the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people. We believe that the Arab Peace Initiative should form the basis for restoring peace to the region in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights and establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. We also condemn Israeli aggressions and attacks against Al-Aqsa mosque and the construction work that threatens the sanctity of the mosque.

The coalition forces that support Yemen's legitimacy have sought to help the Yemeni people. The international community has rejected what the rebels are attempting to do. The Kingdom supports the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to reach a political resolution based on Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the outcomes of the Yemen National Dialogue. The legitimate Government accepted this proposal, but the rebels rejected it and they continue to threaten and kill innocent civilians.

We are the biggest supporter of humanitarian operations in Yemen. We have provided humanitarian and development assistance, amounting to about 2 per cent of our income, to 95 countries. That is in addition to our humanitarian work for which purpose we have established the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

The crisis in Syria has left hundreds of thousands of people dead and injured, displaced millions and calls

on us all to put an end to an unprecedented tragedy. Based on the first Geneva conference on the crisis in Syria, it is high time to find a political solution to the crisis that would ensure Syria's unity and maintain its institutions. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Kingdom has opened its doors to host hundreds of thousands of Syrians, not as refugees in camps but on the basis of brotherly and ethical principles in order to maintain their dignity and safety. We have provided them with all of the necessary facilities, as well as health care. We also provided them with job and education opportunities.

We call on our brothers and sisters in Libya to continue to rebuild their State and confront the terrorist groups. With regard to Iraq, we stress that it is important to maintain Iraq's unity and territorial integrity and rid the country of all terrorist groups. We condemn any activity that leads to strife and violence.

Our embassy in Tehran and our consulate in Mashhad were the targets of attacks under the watchful eye of the Iranian authorities. They have not provided us with sufficient protection, as stipulated in international agreements. We therefore call on the Iranian authorities to assume their responsibility in that regard. We seek good relations with Iran based on the principles of good-neighbourliness and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. We call for the end of the Iranian occupation of the three Emirati islands

We assert that all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction must be eliminated from the Middle East and that a date must be set for the international conference to create a Middle East free of nuclear weapons. The Kingdom is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with the principles of Islam. We call for the adoption of policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We also need to look at sources of energy as complementary and not as alternatives to other energy sources and in a way that would ensure sustainable development for all. In that regard, we note that the Kingdom has invested in developing new carbon capture technology in our effort to protect and preserve the environment.

We would also like to highlight the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was ratified by the General Assembly last year. We have launched our vision for 2030, which is based on the main principles of the 2030 Agenda, on Arab and Islamic cultures and traditions and on our geographic location. That vision is aimed at advancing our economy and achieved development in the fields of energy, industry, health, education, tourism and other fields.

In order to increase our non-oil exports and create the necessary conditions to attract local and international investment, we have also worked with the private sector so that it could become the State's main partner. We have also provided essential services in health, education and housing.

We will spare no effort in working with the international community in order to achieve the good of humankind. We will continue to play our role at the humanitarian, political and economic levels. We will also seek to reform United Nations agencies and are confident that the Organization will be able to respond to tomorrow's challenges so that future generations will enjoy peace, security and stability.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the statement he has just made.

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait)(*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the President and his country, the Republic of Fiji, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and to assure him of my country's full cooperation as he shoulders a great responsibility. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to his

predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his efforts and his success in presiding over the discussions of the previous session.

We would also like to sincerely thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose mandate will expire at the end of the year. He has spent almost a decade at the helm of the Organization and has worked diligently and honestly to promote international peace and security. He has played a prominent role in enhancing the performance of the organs of the United Nations and in achieving major milestones, such as the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the signing of the global agreement on climate change. We would like to wish His Excellency every success in his future endeavours and look forward to his continued service to the causes of security, peace and development.

At this new session of the General Assembly, we convene under the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world" amid unprecedented security and economic challenges. That will require greater coordination and the doubling of our efforts to overcome such challenges, limit their impact and address their root causes. In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes the two historic agreements on climate change, signed by Kuwait at this very rostrum in April, and the comprehensive and inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose Goals we hope will be achieved. We pledge to make every effort to contribute effectively within the framework of an international partnership to fully implement the Sustainable Development Goals over the next 14 years.

As we stand in support of the developing countries and the least developed countries, the State of Kuwait firmly believes that countries afflicted by natural disasters and those affected by the scourge of war need to be assisted. That should be done in a manner ensuring the enhancement of the relations Kuwait has had with the peoples and countries of the world since it attained its independence in 1961. It has set out a consistent approach according to which it stands by the developing and least developed countries. Kuwait has attained a prestigious standing among donors providing humanitarian assistance as a consequence of its initiatives and continued response to the appeals launched by the United Nations and its specialized agencies to alleviate the suffering of affected peoples and countries throughout the world, thereby helping them cope with their crises.

Kuwait is also eager to achieve a world in which justice and equality prevail in support of human values and where the haves unconditionally provide for the deserving have-nots. In that regard, I would like to reiterate Kuwait's intention to honour all its pledges made at international conferences.

Kuwait is proud to occupy first place in the provision of humanitarian assistance as a ratio of its gross domestic income, according to United Nations statistics for 2015. Kuwait takes pride in such recognition, and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development continues to play a pioneering role in providing soft loans and grants, representing approximately $20 billion, to fund development programmes, which have benefited 105 countries in various parts of the world.

Consistently adhering to the noble purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the State of Kuwait has worked towards achieving and laying down the foundations of security and stability in our region through participating in all efforts that contribute to the promotion of international peace and security. In that connection, I would like to refer to the crisis in Yemen and to renew our support for the political solution brokered by the United Nations in accordance with the outcome of the national dialogue, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, its implementation mechanism, and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). The State of Kuwait hosted the Yemeni peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations from April to August in order to restore security and stability in Yemen while preserving its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We take this opportunity to renew our praise of and support for the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmad, and call upon him to intensify those efforts for the prompt resumption of dialogue between the Yemeni parties under the aegis of the United Nations.

In Syria, we are following with concern the ongoing crisis, which is now entering its sixth year, and the worsening conditions throughout the country. The deteriorating humanitarian situation has displaced 13 million Syrians within and beyond the country's borders, making the Syrian people the largest refugee community in the world. The number of those who have been killed now exceeds 250,000. We strongly condemn the intentional targeting of residential areas and civil

and medical facilities, indiscriminate bombing, and the use of barrel bombs and internationally banned weapons. We also demand that all those responsible for perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity be brought to justice within the international justice system.

Driven by its desire to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, the State of Kuwait has hosted three international pledging conferences to support humanitarian efforts in Syria. Pledges totalled more than $7 billion, of which my country contributed $1.3 billion. The largest share of those pledges has been allotted to United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with humanitarian affairs. That effort complements Kuwait's participation as co-host of the fourth Supporting Syria and the Region conference, held in London early this year.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its support for United Nations and other international efforts aimed at reaching a political solution in Syria in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which charted a clear path for the political solution based on the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and the two Vienna communiqués. I also commend the efforts of the United States of America and the Russian Federation to reach a ceasefire that would pave the way for political talks among the Syrian parties to reach a settlement that would preserve the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and independence of Syria, realizing the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people.

International efforts have been carried out to combat the phenomena of terrorism, extremism and acts of violence, which have been on the rise as a new international reality because of the ongoing crises in the region, for which no permanent solution is in sight. It is therefore incumbent upon us to recognize that combating these odious phenomena is an international responsibility and that no single country by itself, despite its every effort, can confront or eliminate them. It is also morally impermissible to link the phenomena to any nationality, religion or civilization.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its principled and firm position in condemning terrorist acts in all their forms and manifestations, as well as its total rejection of all acts of violence and extremism that not only run counter to international laws and norms, but also to the teachings of the true tenets of Islam, all other divine religions, and cultural and human values. In that context, the State of Kuwait is actively contributing to combating terrorism by providing support and backing to the international coalition established to combat what is known as the Da'esh terrorist group in Iraq.

We reiterate our position to stand by and support the Government of Iraq, and we commend its achievements in combating terrorism and confronting Da'esh. We emphasize our support for its measures and actions to maintain its own security, stability and territorial integrity.

Turning to the situation Libya, which is a source of grave concern, the State of Kuwait welcomes the decision of the Presidential Council to form the Government of National Accord. Kuwait considers it an important step towards the implementation of the provisions of the Libyan Political Agreement, and one that we hope will assist our Libyan brothers in overcoming the status quo in a manner that preserves the unity and independence of Libya and the prosperity of its people.

The failure of the international community to find a permanent and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East threatens peace and security in the region more than ever as a result of the oppressive practices of the Israeli occupation forces and Israel's consistent, excessive and unjustifiable use of force against the Palestinian people in blatant and clear-cut violation of resolutions of international legitimacy and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The persistence of the Israeli occupation authority in pursuing aggressive practices and policies against the Palestinian people regrettably emanates from a firm conviction that Israel is immune from any international accountability, exempt from any prosecution and protected from any criticism or condemnation by international organizations. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Security Council to carry out its responsibilities and pressure Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy. Such implementation would lead to the Palestinian people's attaining their legitimate political rights and their own independent State with their own territory. East Jerusalem would be its capital and its borders would be those of 4 June 1967, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In support of Palestine, the State of Kuwait is currently working on hosting an international

conference on the suffering of Palestinian children, which will shed light on Israel's serious and persistent violations of international conventions and norms relative to the rights of the child. In this connection, I wish to praise the initiative of the friendly French Republic and its efforts to push the Middle East peace process forward. The joint communiqué of 3 June 2016 on the subject of an international conference reflects its interest in launching a new process with a view to reaching a just and comprehensive solution in the region.

As regards the Islamic Republic of Iran, the State of Kuwait, along with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, looks forward to relations of friendship and cooperation with Iran permeated with understanding and mutual respect. We also wish to emphasize the need to create appropriate conditions for constructive dialogue to take place in conformity with the rules and norms of international law relating to the principles of good-neighbourly relations, respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, and refraining from any practices that contravene international conventions and norms that threaten the security and stability of the region. Additionally, the occupation of the three Emirate islands must end and the concerns of our sister nation, the United Arab Emirates, must be addressed and receive a solution, through either direct negotiation or resort to the International Court of Justice.

In conclusion, I am pleased to refer to the candidature of the State of Kuwait for membership in the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to extend my thanks to all the member States of the Asia and Pacific Group in New York, which endorsed Kuwait's candidature last month. We look forward to the support of all States Members of the United Nations in the elections that will be held in June next year. As I have emphasized, my country is committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Being a small, peace-loving country, Kuwait bases its relations with others on the principles of respect for sovereignty and independence, good-neighbourly relations and non-interference in their internal affairs. We look forward to facilitating the process of finding solutions by consensus. Peace be upon you.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): We congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We agree that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be the focus of the session. We also pay tribute to Mr. Lykketoft for his able stewardship of the seventieth session.

Today, three decades after the end of the Cold War, our multipolar world is more free and vibrant, yet still chaotic and turbulent; more interdependent, but more unequal; more prosperous, yet still afflicted by poverty. We see spectacular progress, but also unprecedented human suffering. The world is at a historic inflection point. The international order established after the Second World War is passing away, but a new order has yet to emerge. Competition between the major Powers is becoming more confrontational. This can pose serious threats to peace across Asia. A new cold war threatens to engulf Europe, where the momentum towards greater union has already been reversed. Barricades and walls are going up, especially against the tide of misery flowing out of a turbulent Middle East. In many countries, intolerance has revived the ghosts of xenophobia and Islamophobia.

Turmoil is intensifying in the Middle East. International efforts to defeat Da'esh are therefore urgent. For this, it is essential to reconcile the divergent objectives and priorities of regional and external Powers. Peace cannot be built when injustice prevails. The long-

festering tragedy of Palestine demands determined action on the part of the international community.

After decades of strong growth, the world economy has reached a plateau. Yet despite the adverse international economic environment, in the past three years my Government has moved the country towards robust growth. We have fully integrated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into our own economic and social strategy, based on our conviction that people are the true wealth of our nation and that human development will determine our future destiny.

Our priority goal of economic development requires internal peace and stability. My country has been the principal victim of terrorism in our world, including terrorism supported, sponsored and financed from abroad. We will not allow externally sponsored terrorism and threats of destabilization to cause turbulence in Pakistan. Tens of thousands of our citizens and thousands of our security personnel have been killed or injured in terrorist attacks. That has only reinforced our resolve to eliminate the scourge of terrorism. Our comprehensive strategy of law enforcement and targeted military operations has produced remarkable results and enabled Pakistan to turn the tide against terrorists. Our Zarb-e-Azb operation is the largest, most robust and most successful anti-terrorism campaign anywhere in the world, deploying 200,000 of our security forces. Our comprehensive national action plan is fully endorsed by our people and our Parliament as well as by our security forces, all of whom have made heroic sacrifices to defeat terrorism.

Terrorism, however, is now a global phenomenon that must be addressed comprehensively and in all its forms, including State terrorism. The international community must coordinate its efforts if we are to accomplish that. Such efforts should be approached collectively, not through the unilateral enactment of laws with extraterritorial provisions that target certain countries. We will not win the fight against terrorism and violent extremism if we do not address their root causes. They lie in poverty and ignorance, political and social injustice and oppression, foreign intervention and occupation and denial of the legitimate rights of peoples and nations, especially the right to self-determination. Until those underlying causes are addressed, it will be difficult to counter the twisted narrative of violent extremists and terrorists.

After 15 years of the current war in Afghanistan, the international community agrees that the only road to a lasting peace in that country is through a dialogue between the Government in Kabul and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan has long proposed this as the most viable way to end the decades of conflict and suffering in Afghanistan. Based on that belief in a negotiated peace, and in response to requests from President Ashraf Ghani, we have been facilitating the process of reconciliation in Afghanistan. There have been setbacks, but they are not a sufficient reason to abandon the path of peace and rely on the military option, which for the past decade and a half has failed to stabilize Afghanistan. Progress will be assured only when the Afghan parties themselves conclude that there is no military solution to the war and begin to work assiduously, through a meaningful dialogue process, to achieve reconciliation and peace at home.

More than three and a half decades of conflict and chaos in Afghanistan have had grave security and economic consequences for Pakistan. Almost 3 million Afghan refugees, to whom we have opened our homes and hearts, remain in Pakistan. We hope to see them return home voluntarily and with dignity. Until they do, the international community must shoulder its responsibility for helping to sustain them.

Confrontation should not be our destiny in South Asia. Pakistan wants peace with India and we have gone the extra mile to achieve it, repeatedly offering to hold a dialogue to address all outstanding issues. But India has posed unacceptable preconditions for engaging in dialogue. Let us be clear that talks are not some special favour for Pakistan. They are in the interest of both countries. They are essential to resolving our differences, especially in the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and to averting the danger of any escalation.

Peace and normalization between Pakistan and India cannot be achieved without a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. That is an objective evaluation, not a partisan position. Our predictions have now been confirmed by events. A new generation of Kashmiris has risen spontaneously against India, demanding freedom from its illegal occupation. The young leader Burhan Wani, murdered by Indian forces, has emerged as a symbol of the latest Kashmiri intifada, a popular and peaceful freedom movement led by Kashmiris young and old, men and women, armed only with undying faith in the legitimacy of their cause and a hunger for freedom in their hearts.

As usual, the indigenous Kashmiri uprising has been met with brutal repression by India's occupation force of more than half a million soldiers. More than a hundred Kashmiris have been killed; hundreds, including children and infants, have been blinded by shotgun pellets; and more than 6,000 unarmed civilians have been injured over the past two months.

The Indian brutalities are well documented. I would like to inform the General Assembly that Pakistan will share with the Secretary-General a dossier containing detailed information and evidence of the gross and systematic violations of human rights committed by Indian forces in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The brutalities will not suppress the Kashmiris' spirits; they will only intensify their anger and fortify their determination to see India end its occupation of Kashmir. From Srinagar to Sopore, the men, women and children come out each day, defying a curfew, to demand freedom.

Pakistan fully supports the demand of the Kashmiri people for self-determination, as several Security Council resolutions have promised them. Their struggle is a legitimate one for liberation from alien occupation. International law and the declarations of the United Nations on self-determination give them the right to struggle for their freedom. Every year, the General Assembly unanimously adopts a resolution that reaffirms the right of all peoples to self-determination and calls on the States concerned to immediately end their occupation and all acts of repression.

On behalf of the Kashmiri people; on behalf of the mothers and fathers of the innocent Kashmiri children; on behalf of women and men who have been killed, blinded and injured; on behalf of the Pakistani nation, I demand an independent inquiry into the extrajudicial killings and a United Nations fact-finding mission to investigate brutalities perpetrated by the Indian occupying forces so that those guilty of such atrocities are punished. We demand the immediate release of all Kashmiri political prisoners, an end to the curfew, freedom for the Kashmiris to demonstrate peacefully, urgent medical help for the injured and abrogation of India's draconian laws.

The Security Council has called for the exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of Jammu and Kashmir through a free and fair plebiscite, held under United Nations auspices. The people of Kashmir have waited 70 years for the implementation of that promise. The Security Council must honour its commitments by implementing its own decisions. The General Assembly must demand that India deliver on the commitments its leaders solemnly made on many occasions.

To that end, steps should be taken by the United Nations to demilitarize Jammu and Kashmir and undertake consultations with India, Pakistan and the true representatives of the Kashmiri people to implement the resolutions of the Security Council. In that context, we welcome the offer of his good offices by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We will also open consultations with members of the Security Council to explore the modalities for the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions on Kashmir.

The international community ignores the danger of rising tensions in South Asia at its own peril. For its part, Pakistan is committed to the establishment of strategic stability in the region. It neither wants nor is engaged in an arms race with India. But we cannot ignore our neighbour's unprecedented arms build-up, and we will take whatever measures are necessary to maintain credible deterrence. We have consistently urged the conclusion of bilateral arms control and disarmament measures between Pakistan and India to prevent conflict and avoid wasteful military expenditures.

We are open to discussing all measures of restraint and responsibility with India in any forum or format and without any conditions. We are ready for talks to agree on a bilateral nuclear test ban treaty. Today, from this rostrum, I would also like to reiterate our offer to India to enter into a serious and sustained dialogue for the peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes, especially Jammu and Kashmir.

As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, Pakistan will continue to cooperate with all international efforts that seek to promote fair and equitable solutions to disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. We have introduced state-of-the-art measures to strengthen the safety and security of our nuclear materials and facilities. We have adopted a comprehensive export control regime that is fully consistent with international standards. Judged on the basis of objective criteria and without discrimination, Pakistan is fully eligible for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

In our turbulent and interdependent world, the United Nations remains an indispensable organization in terms of restoring order and ensuring global peace,

stability and prosperity. Its principles remain the crucial pillars of international legality, the guide for the conduct of Member States and the guarantor of the legitimate rights of all nations and peoples. The United Nations must regain its credibility as the central instrument for the promotion of peace, prosperity and liberty. To that end, it should become more representative, transparent and accountable. A comprehensive and democratic reform of the Security Council, which Pakistan supports, should enhance its relevance and representation. Creating new centres of privilege will do the opposite.

Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the United Nations is well established. We have played a pioneering and consistent role in United Nations peacekeeping. Despite our own security requirements, we will remain one of the world's largest troop-contributing countries and maintain our record of success in multiple United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Pakistan has a vital stake in ending conflicts, fostering peace, fighting terrorism, strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, generating global growth and overcoming the challenges of environmental degradation. We can achieve those goals and create a new and peaceful world order, solely through the United Nations and with strict adherence to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aung San Sun Kyi, State Counsellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Ms. Kyi (Myanmar): As the first representative of the new Government of Myanmar to speak before the Assembly, it is my duty and my privilege to reaffirm our faith and confidence in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The strength of the Organization lies in its universality and legitimacy, anchored in the Charter and in the fundamental principles of international law. For all its imperfections and limitations, the United Nations remains a receptacle of our hopes for a more peaceful and prosperous world, a kinder, more compassionate home for all humankind.

My country joined the United Nations as the newly independent Union of Burma in 1948. It was an era of determined hope, when the peoples of the world rose out of the ravages of war to build anew their countries and their faith in the human capacity for achieving peace with egalitarianism, prosperity with justice. Now, once again, it is a time of determined hope for Myanmar. When our people cast the overwhelming majority of their votes in favour of the National League for Democracy during the elections in November 2015, they were demonstrating their support, not just for a political party, but for a political culture founded on a belief in their right and their capacity to fashion the future of the country in the shape of their dreams and aspirations. And those dreams and aspirations echo the dreams and aspirations that led to the founding of the United Nations.

The dream of turning swords into ploughshares — or, to use a more modern idiom, converting weapons of destruction into farm machinery — is one that our people, who have long been compelled to sacrifice their sleep and their fields to the exigencies of conflict, understand in their hearts and their minds. To be safe in our own homes, to be confident in our capacity to realize our full potential, to be happy in the promise of progress for our young and security for our elderly, to be strong in our rights and duties as citizens of a peaceful and prosperous Union — those are our simple aspirations. They are simple, but, it hardly needs to be said, not easy to achieve. And the only path that will lead us to our goals is the path of peace, the path that we must follow with hope and determination.

The people of Myanmar have long been deprived of their inherent right to live in peace and security, to fundamental freedom and to development — to sustainable development, in the context of the Goals of our 2030 Agenda. For a country that has experienced over six decades of internal armed conflict, nothing is more important than the achievement of lasting peace and national reconciliation. It is a difficult and complex task and one which the new Government of Myanmar is taking on as a major challenge and a high priority.

Recently, we convened the first session of the Union Peace Conference, also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference, as it embodies the spirit of Panglong, the 1947 conference that paved the way to the founding of the independent Union of Burma. Attended by representatives of the Government, Parliament, armed forces, ethnic armed groups, political

parties and civil society organizations, the Union Peace Conference is based on the principle of inclusiveness and embodies the spirit of Union. The Conference is not an end in itself. It is the first vital step on our journey to national reconciliation and lasting peace that will save succeeding generations from the scourge of fraternal strife, which has brought untold sorrow to our peoples.

Over the past few years, the world has focused its attention on the situation in the country's Rakhine state. As a responsible member of the community of nations, we do not fear international scrutiny. We are committed to a sustainable solution that will lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within the state.

Our Government is taking a holistic approach that makes development central to both short- and long-term programmes aimed at promoting understanding and trust. The Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State was established soon after our new Government took office. The working committees established under the Central Committee are undertaking the tasks of establishing security, peace and stability, and rule of law; scrutinizing immigration and citizenship; facilitating settlements and implementing socioeconomic development; and coordinating and cooperating with United Nations agencies and international organizations in providing humanitarian assistance. To buttress our efforts to address the issue comprehensively and more effectively, we have also established the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

There has been persistent opposition from some quarters to the establishment of the Commission. However, we are determined to persevere in our endeavour to achieve harmony, peace and prosperity in Rakhine state. Here, I would like to take the opportunity to ask for the understanding and constructive contribution of the international community. By standing firm against the forces of prejudice and intolerance, we are reaffirming our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person.

Peace and national reconciliation are prerequisites for the successful implementation of policies and programmes aimed at fulfilling the social and economic needs of our people. Myanmar's 2016 national economic and development policy is designed to meet many of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those concerning the enhancement of infrastructure investment, agriculture, the private sector, small and medium-sized enterprises and, in particular, poverty alleviation. National reconciliation, job creation and conservation of natural resources, capacity-building and creating opportunities for the young are the key objectives of our people-centred inclusive policy.

Many of our shared concerns as Members of the United Nations have already been discussed comprehensively in the Assembly since the general debate opened yesterday. Mindful of the President's exhortation to keep within the limits of the time allotted to each of us, I will therefore touch upon just a few issues: migration, terrorism, nuclear disarmament. I asked my delegation how it would be if I spoke for less than 15 minutes, and they assured me that it would make everybody very happy.

Durable solutions to problems can be found only by investigating their roots. The unprecedented scale of migration in recent years and the consequent sufferings make it an imperative to address the two most important causes of irregular migration: lack of peace and lack of development. While talking about building peace and development, we cannot neglect the important aspect of enhancing respect for human rights, equality, diversity and tolerance with a balanced implementation of multidimensional economic policies. It is a challenging task, and there is a need for countries to work in collaboration with each other to seek just and comprehensive solutions in compliance with international law.

Migrants contribute to the economies of their host countries and to the global economy. I therefore believe that building cooperation and collaboration between the host country and the country of origin in ensuring the rights of migrant workers will be mutually reinforcing for both. Our planet is a place to be shared by all. Sharing values and wealth will create a better world for all of us.

We must be united in standing against all forms and manifestations of violent extremism related to religious, cultural and social intolerance. Having identified extremism as a root of terrorism, we need to explore the causes of extremism. Lack of social and economic security are, no doubt, important factors, but I believe that we also need to consider the possibility that lack of purpose, of a sense of direction in life, could be a force

that drives many, especially the young, into the snare of ideologies that appear to offer certainty.

Myanmar advocates a world free of nuclear weapons. The annual resolution tabled by my country on nuclear disarmament aims at achieving peace and security for present and future generations. Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world contributes to this goal. I am happy to inform the Assembly that we will be depositing our instrument of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty this afternoon.

We have known the cost of contention and suffered the wounds of strife. It is something that we do not wish for anybody or any country in our world. I would like to thank all those who have helped us along our road to build a truly democratic federal union. It has been a hard road and we have been helped by compassion, by loving kindness and by understanding. We would like to see these qualities displayed more often in addressing the problems of our world today. I have witnessed too much anger, hatred, resentment, and demands for rather than offers of service. We would like our world to be a kinder world, one that places giving above receiving.

We are taught in Burma that the causes of corruption are greed, anger, fear and ignorance. I am not talking of corruption as simply the offering or taking of bribes, but rather the corruption of human nature. Anger, greed, fear and ignorance corrupt human nature, and as a result our whole world is corrupted. I would like to call on all to help us in making the world a truly better place for us to live in, and for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren to live in. Where but in this gathering of nations can I make such an appeal? So, I appeal to all to stand up against anger and hatred, against fear and ignorance, and to find a way to build a better world through our capacity for compassion and loving kindness, and our ability to be happy in the good fortune of others.

Address by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abe (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): North Korea has now openly shown itself to be a threat to peace. How must we respond? The raison d'être of the United Nations is now being seriously challenged. North Korea has tested submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Immediately after that, it fired three ballistic missiles simultaneously, each traversing 1,000 kilometres to reach Japan's exclusive economic zone. It is purely a matter of good fortune that no commercial aircraft or ships suffered any damage during that incident. This year alone, North Korea has launched a total of 21 ballistic missiles. In addition, it claims to have successfully detonated a nuclear warhead in a test on 9 September. That nuclear test followed another test conducted in January. That series of missile launches and the detonation of a warhead completely changes the landscape.

North Korea's nuclear development and the repeated launches of ballistic missiles are two sides of the same coin. Before our very eyes, North Korea is carrying out a plan that is plain to see. It is clear that the threat has now reached a new dimension. We must therefore respond in a manner entirely distinct from our responses thus far. We must act in unison and thwart North Korea's plans.

Immediately upon hearing the report of the nuclear test, I telephoned President Barack Obama of the United States. After that I also held telephone talks with President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea. We all agreed that our three countries would collaborate closely and show resolve in our attitude towards North Korea. Now is the time for the United Nations to act. Now is the time for the Security Council to adopt an unambiguous position regarding the unprecedented threat.

It was only four months ago that President Obama visited Hiroshima, where countless innocent citizens fell victim to the first atomic bomb ever detonated. It was a day on which we renewed pledges. No matter how long it takes, we must never, even for the briefest moment, let up in our efforts to secure the total elimination of nuclear weapons. On that day, our pledges linked both sides of the Pacific and gained new strength. This notwithstanding, North Korea is now escalating its

provocations. It is a challenge that we cannot overlook, as to do so would weigh on our collective conscience.

Peace is much like glass — when polished and transparent, we do not see it. A small crack can be overlooked for a while without changing, but before you know it, the crack expands and one day the glass shatters resoundingly. That is why, day in and day out, we must habituate ourselves to handling glass with great care, so that no cracks form. I believe that the original intention of the United Nations, created in the wake of two world wars, was that kind of keen awareness. For that very reason, it would simply be unacceptable to continue to tolerate military provocation, because that would be equivalent to openly cracking the glass.

Moreover, the threat to peace now plainly manifests itself, and North Korea's persistent military provocations are far more serious than before. North Korea is, without a doubt, poised to acquire submarine-launched ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. Let us not forget that this is a country that abducted a large number of Japanese citizens, including a 13 year-old girl, shattering their peaceful lives, and to date they have not been allowed to return to their homeland. We have demanded that North Korea return them immediately, but they have refused. This is a country that tramples human rights, where the checks and balances of power are ignored. It is a country that continues to build up its arsenal, which includes missiles and nuclear weapons, while paying no attention to the plight of its citizens. The threat to the international community has become increasingly grave and real. It calls for innovative responses that are altogether different from previous approaches.

In December, Japan will mark the sixtieth anniversary of its entry into the United Nations. Sixty-two years have elapsed, if we count from the moment that the toll of the bronze Peace Bell sent by a Japanese citizen began sounding in the front gardens of the United Nations grounds on the International Day of Peace, as it does every year. The bell was cast by melting down coins sent by Pope Pius XII and coins and medals sent by children and adults from more than 60 countries around the world. What was the wish of the Japanese people that accompanied it?

Sixty years ago, when Japan was first seated in this Hall, it wholeheartedly advocated world peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons, as it has done consistently and unfailingly ever since. It was a pledge designed to be passed down from generation to generation, a pledge not to stop walking along the path that would make world peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons a reality.

On this occasion today, I had originally intended to look back at the path we have trodden these 60 years and quietly reflect on Japan's progress along that road, with world peace and prosperity as its goals. However, the North Korea threat is reaching a new level. Therefore, in the light of Japan having upheld its pledge these 60 years, and as the world focuses on whether the United Nations will thwart North Korea's ambitions or the Security Council will be able to confront North Korea in a united way, I feel I must state that Japan, as a Security Council member, will lead the Council's discussions. I declare before the national representatives gathered here in the General Assembly Hall that this is our absolute resolve. No matter the issue before us, or how many challenges we are faced with, Japan, as it marks its sixtieth year of membership, will spare no effort to strengthen the United Nations.

The cumulative total of the assessed contributions to the United Nations and the assessed contributions to peacekeeping operations that Japan has paid, when their book value is tallied, easily exceeds $20 billion. The only country whose total financial contributions surpasses that of Japan over the past 30 years is the United States. In addition, our track record of development assistance amounts to $334.5 billion, again in terms of the book value.

As I see it, the United Nations has historically been committed to three great causes: devotion to peace, the pursuit of growth, and the desire for a world free of injustice and unfairness. I believe members will recognize that Japan is a country that has made all-out efforts to promote all three of those causes over the past 60 years.

Growth serves as the foundation for all else. Only when there is growth does peace take root and can injustices be rectified over time. Take a look and see how greater Asia has now surpassed every other region as regards the size of its population living under democracy. This is precisely the fruit of the growth that Asia has been enjoying since the mid-1980s, which happens also to be the time at which Japanese companies began their large-scale direct investments in Asian nations.

It was only through a free and open trade and investment environment that Japan was able to

grow — the very same environment that is responsible for the present-day prosperity of the countries of Asia. Peace, stability and safety at sea, together with freedom of navigation and overflight, are the basis for the peace and prosperity of the international community.

In the event of disputes, the international community must adhere strictly to the principle that States shall make their claims based on international law, shall not use force or coercion in support of their claims and shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means. Japan will unfailingly continue to uphold a world order that is open, free and unwavering in its commitment to the rule of law and international norms.

Let me also say that at the core of the Japanese Government I have formed a special team, which I lead directly, that is working to further the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Government of Japan will accelerate the work towards early conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and will carry out without fail its pledge to provide ¥1.3 trillion in assistance for developing countries by 2020. I will make sure that this will be done.

Japan will spare no effort in strengthening the United Nations in the 60 years to come, just as it did over the past 60 years. I wish to pledge this, grounded in trust in the Japanese people.

An unexpected visitor appeared at a worksite in Juba, South Sudan, where members of an engineering unit belonging to the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (SDF) and wearing the blue helmets of the United Nations were carrying out activities. He said to them,

> "I am really thankful that Japan is building roads. I place my full confidence in you. Isn't there anything I can do? Let me help you. I don't need anything in return."

Again the next day, and the day after that, the man appeared at the worksite, where an arterial road was being laid in the capital of South Sudan, the youngest Member of the United Nations. On the third day, the man began doing the work that he knew would be necessary, and he continued working with the members of the SDF for eight days. When they went their separate ways, as they were patting each other on the back and expressing regret that they had to part, it goes without saying that our engineering unit members, who had heard nothing but words of thanks from this man, were deeply moved. Juma Ago Isaac — the SDF members each wrote the name of this otherwise unknown man from South Sudan in their notebooks to remember him.

No matter what the job or where it is, the Japanese engaged in international cooperation always consider this kind of encounter at local worksites to be their real reward. Wherever they go, nameless people become aware of their own abilities and realize that nation-building begins at the very place where they themselves are standing. The Japanese witnessing this are moved in ways that become memories lasting their entire lives.

It is a source of quiet pride for me that the relationship between Japan and the United Nations has for the past 60 years brought hearts together in this way in Asia, in Africa and indeed all around the world. This is Japan's United Nations spirit. I pledge not to forget this and to foster it and hand it down to the next generation.

I will end my address by pointing out the need for fundamental changes in the United Nations governance structure. Countries in Africa and Latin America have built up a degree of influence they never had before in global politics and the global economy, and yet they do not have satisfactory representation on the Security Council. This single example makes the present composition of the Security Council indefensible to the current generation. The international relations that prevailed 71 years ago, at the end of the Second World War, are now relegated to the history books. They hold no relevance for the countries that have since then achieved their independence. At the sixth Tokyo International Conference for African Development, which Japan and the countries of Africa recently convened, I heard the leaders describe the fact that Africa has no permanent representation on the Security Council as a historical injustice, and I concurred in deep agreement.

Africa's long-term goal is to have permanent members on the Security Council by 2023, which Japan thoroughly supports. If we do not carry out a reform of the Security Council now, it may well be put off for another decade or two. Which position are we to take — that of undermining the values of the United Nations, or that of striving to strengthen the United Nations? If we choose the latter, then it goes without saying that Security Council reform is a matter of urgency. I will end my address here by emphasizing that point.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Montenegro.

Mr. Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Đukanović (Montenegro) (*spoke in Montenegrin; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of Montenegro and to once again reaffirm the unequivocal commitment of my country to the United Nations.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji on his election as President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session. We welcome the theme chosen for this sessin, in the light of the universal importance of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the Assembly at its seventieth session, for his leadership and his many efforts invested in creating prerequisites for the efficient implementation of crucial agreements on sustainable development and climate change.

This is the last general debate for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I would like to express my particular appreciation to him for his essential contributions aimed at building a safer and more prosperous world, especially in the light of the past decade, one tarnished by myriad challenges and crises. It could not have been easy to lead the Organization in such conditions.

Despite the progress made in many areas, the current global situation raises many concerns. In many places around the world, peace, stability and sustainable economic development are still proving unattainable. Brutal and long-term conflicts have taken their toll on hundreds and thousands of individuals, destroying millions of people's lives, the majority of whom are women and children. Extreme poverty, weak institutions and serious breaches of human rights are still the harsh reality for a large number of people around the world. Fundamental pillars of international law are being violated by non-State stakeholders, and violent extremism and terrorism induce constant instability, leading to millions of people being forced to leave their homes. Other countries' willingness to admit them is becoming increasingly uncertain, and the humanitarian funds raised are insufficient to meet those people's basic needs.

In the current situation, where increasingly complex challenges know no boundaries and where no country is able to cope alone, we are compelled to turn to the United Nations, a world Organization like no other, where collective solutions can be reached. It is encouraging that the past few years have been marked by historic multilateral agreements, paving the way for global transformation and sustainable progress. That is a reflection of the general willingness to change the status quo. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 carry significant importance and are characterized by their interdependence. It is time to assume our responsibility and commit to their implementation, so that all citizens have an equal chance to live a dignified life without violence, discrimination or extreme poverty.

Montenegro, despite its size and small share in global emissions, has been committed to implementing the agreements I mentioned through sustainable development initiatives, even though its contribution may be small. Montenegro is one of 22 Members of the United Nations to have presented a voluntary national report on the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the High-level Political Forum in July, further proof of that commitment.

Montenegro was also one of the first States to adopt the SDGs as part of a national sustainable development strategy, in place until 2030. The strategy ensures that the principal measures needed to achieve long-term sustainable development goals in Montenegro have been implemented, while the country has also adhered to all necessary international commitments in line with the 2030 Agenda. The strategy is for the long term and aims not only to boost the economy and help the environment but also to capitalize on human resources

and social capital. That should lead to prosperous development for our country's citizens.

Montenegro strongly believes that the Paris Agreement is a foundation on which further efforts to preserve climate systems can be based, thereby ensuring that all countries, regardless of their stage of development, progressively raise their ambitions in order to achieve their final goals. In line with the provisions of the Paris Agreement, Montenegro reaffirms its ambitious contribution, which is to reduce its own greenhouse-gas emissions by 30 per cent compared with those of 1990. We wish to formally ratify that commitment as soon as possible, in order to initiate its implementation.

Our commitment to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement will pose a challenge for our entire system and will need to include all the stakeholders at the national and local levels of management and in all segments of society. Like many other countries, Montenegro will require additional support from the international community and the financial mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I refer primarily to the Green Climate Fund.

Too often the international community is not able to prevent or end bloodshed, criminal activity and the suffering of millions of people around the world. The conflict in Syria, which has continuously attracted attention from the international community and the United Nations, is the most tragic illustration of that inability. Montenegro expresses its deep concern at the conflict and the deteriorating humanitarian security situation, the repercussions of which are felt globally. We fully support an urgent cessation of violence and wish to point out the need for all parties to adhere to international law and United Nations resolutions. It is unacceptable for the international community to condone the war's atrocities. It is not only morally unacceptable, but also contradictory to international law. Therefore, in the absence of a political solution, a temporary agreement must be reached that respects the principles of international law and that would at least alleviate human suffering. Such crimes must not go unpunished — their perpetrators have to be held responsible for breaches of international law and its principles.

The role that the Security Council plays in international and hybrid criminal tribunals is of vital importance. The crises and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, South Sudan and other countries demonstrate the importance of finding a long-term, peaceful solution through political and diplomatic means, which must have supremacy. The fragile and deteriorating nature of international peace and security and its ramifications clearly indicate that our current global approach — that of managing violence and crisis — must give way to an approach based on prevention. It is high time to move from rhetoric to action.

Mediation, a very efficient and peaceful way to prevent conflict, has not been given enough attention, despite Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. Montenegro, being fully aware of the importance of mediation, is organizing a conference next year to contribute to further enhancing mediation in the turbulent area of the Mediterranean. Throughout its history, including in its recent past, Montenegro has been affected by numerous conflicts. Our enthusiasm for and commitment to mediation flow from our commitment to honest dialogue and cooperation. We believe that mediation is the best way to overcome differences, alleviate tension and reach final solutions.

Humankind is facing humanitarian, refugee and migrant crises not seen since the Second World War. We deem it exceptionally important that the General Assembly took up this topic through its hosting of the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. We are in favour of implementing the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1).

We must not for a moment forget that today the world is facing the constant threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Terrorist attacks worldwide and the killing of civilians remind us that we have made only limited progress in dealing with this complex and evolving phenomenon, and that more resolute efforts, unity, coordination and a more active role by every individual State Member of the United Nations are required. Our actions to counter terrorism must focus on preventive measures and on the social, economic and political situation. More especially, they must target vulnerable and marginalized groups, because people susceptible to radicalism are primarily recruited from these groups. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is the best chance to make a positive difference in this respect. Emphasis must be placed on youth and

their empowerment, primarily through employment and education.

In a year that marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of two key international instruments on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the United Nations is facing major challenges with regard to human rights protection and overwhelming humanitarian crises. Therefore, it is necessary to reaffirm the strong commitment of all Member States to the multilateral system of protection and promotion of human rights. The full and immediate application of high standards in the protection of human rights and the translation of international norms into practice in every Member State, without exception, are the prerequisites for peace, stability and development. The United Nations and its Member States should make a much greater effort so that all rights, not only civic and political rights but also economic and social rights, are guaranteed in order to build the necessary conditions to ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The integration of human rights into development policies, especially public policies protecting the rights of the most vulnerable groups at the national level, is a necessary step for effective protection. In that context, the consistent application of the principles of sustainable and inclusive growth in the implementation of economic growth strategies is a necessary precondition for combating poverty and social exclusion.

In order for the United Nations to maintain and strengthen its central position in the system of global governance, the Organization must undergo reforms and adapt to the circumstances of the twenty-first century and to modern democratic principles. The priority in that regard remains a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in order to enhance its efficiency and transparency.

The Delivering as One approach, which Montenegro is also applying, has already delivered positive results in the cooperation between the Organization and host countries. It should therefore be further refined, especially in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Montenegro welcomes the changes introduced as a result of the negotiations on the role of the General Assembly in the process of selecting the Secretary-General. They will help to strengthen transparency and competitiveness and ensure a merit-based approach. Montenegro is proud to have put forward a candidate for the most responsible position in the United Nations system. We have thereby made a qualitative and quantitative contribution to the selection of the best candidate. At the same time, this also confirms our readiness to contribute even more actively to the universal goals of the Charter of the United Nations. On this occasion, I want to express the hope and expectation that the new Secretary-General will come from one of the Eastern European countries, given the need to respect the principle of regional rotation and the fact that our geographical group is the only one never to have provided the Secretary-General to date.

Montenegro marked the tenth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations on 28 June. This was a historic day for our country. It was the greatest confirmation of independence, restored Montenegrin statehood, a signal that we have taken our rightful place in the world family of nations. Since regaining independence, we are continuously strengthening our State in accordance with the European Euro-Atlantic standard, and I am pleased to note that Montenegro is today an example of stability, multi-ethnicity and respect for differences; a reliable neighbour and a reliable international partner; and a leader in Euro-Atlantic integration in the region.

Given our experience, we know that institutions are a foundation for the stability of the State and the rule of law. Integration into NATO and the European Union are national strategic priorities. In May this year Montenegro signed the NATO accession protocol. We believe that the process of ratification of the protocol will be finalized in the short term and that we will very soon meet all the formal preconditions to become a full-fledged member State of NATO. The importance of this historic step for Montenegro will not diminish our enthusiasm for the further improvement of our security, legal and political systems, as NATO membership requires. The same applies as regards our readiness to contribute to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

We have opened 24 of the requisite 35 chapters in the process of our accession to the European Union. We are making strides on the path to membership, reaffirming the potential and capacity of Montenegrin society and its institutions. Montenegro continues to be a reliable and responsible partner for the international community and the United Nations.

Montenegro is a member of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is also a member of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services. We have been elected to membership of the Executive Board of UN-Women, starting next year. After serving on the Human Rights Council from 2014 to 2016, we submitted our application for membership in the Council for the 2022-2024 period. We also presented our candidacy for the Security Council for the 2026-2027 period. We have expanded our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions by deploying military observers to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

The foregoing are indicators that Montenegro is firmly committed to the promotion of the United Nations and to multilateralism and joint action in order to guarantee a peaceful, stable, prosperous and equal world. We are determined to actively and constructively contribute to the efforts of the United Nations in this regard.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2.35 p.m.